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J. Poindexter, Colored

By Irvin S. Cobb

Fiction

J. POINDEXTER, COLORED
SUNDRY ACCOUNTS
FROM PLACE TO PLACE
THOSE TIMES AND THESE
LOCAL COLOR
OLD JUDGE PRIEST
BACK HOME
THE ESCAPE OF MR. TRIMM

Wit and Humor

ONE THIRD OFF
A PLEA FOR OLD CAP COLLIER
THE ABANDONED FARMERS
THE LIFE OF THE PARTY
EATING IN TWO OR THREE LANGUAGES
"OH, WELL, YOU KNOW HOW WOMEN ARE!"
FIBBLE D.D.
"SPEAKING OF OPERATIONS—"
EUROPE REVISED
ROUGHING IT DE LUXE
COBB'S BILL OF FARE
COBB'S ANATOMY

Miscellany

THE THUNDERS OF SILENCE
THE GLORY OF THE COMING
PATHS OF GLORY
"SPEAKING OF PRUSSIANS—"

New York
George H. Doran Company

J. Poindexter, Colored

By

Irvin S. Cobb

Author of
"Old Judge Priest," "Speaking
of Operations—," Etc.

New York
George H. Doran Company

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J. Poindexter, Colored

TO

MARGARET ILLINGTON BOWES

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J. Poindexter, Colored

CHAPTER I

Down Yonaer

MY name is J. Poindexter. But the full name is Jefferson Exodus Poindexter, Colored. But most always in general I has been known as Jeff, for short. The Jefferson part is for a white family which my folks worked for them one time before I was born, and the Exodus is because my mammy craved I should be named after somebody out of the Bible. How I comes to write this is this way:

It seems like my experiences here in New York is liable to be such that one of my white gentleman friends he says to me I should take pen in hand and write them out just the way they happen and at the time they is happening, or right soon afterwards, whilst the memory of them is clear in my brain; and then he'll see if he can't get them printed somewheres, which on top of the other things which I now is, will make

me an author with money coming in steady. He says to me he will fix up the spelling wherever needed and attend to the punctuating; but all the rest of it will be my own just like I puts it down. I reads and writes very well but someway I never learned to puncture. So the places where it is necessary to be punctual in order to make good sense and keep everything regulation and make the talk sound natural is his doings and also some of the spelling. But everything else is mine and I asks credit.

My coming to New York, in the first place, is sort of a sudden thing which starts here about a month before the present time. I has been working for Judge Priest for going on sixteen years and is expecting to go on working for him as long as we can get along together all right, which it seems like from appearances that ought to be always. But after he gives up being circuit judge on account of him getting along so in age he gets sort of fretful by reasons of him not having much to do any more and most of his own friends having died off on him. When the state begins going Republican

about once in so often, he says to me, kind of half joking, he's a great mind to pull up stakes and move off and go live somewheres else. But pretty soon after that the whole country goes dry and then he says to me there just naturally ain't no fitten place left for him to go to without he leaves the United States.

The old boss-man he broods a right smart over this going-dry business. Being a judge and all, he's always been a great hand for upholding the law. But this here is one law which he cannot uphold and yet go on taking of his sweetening drams steady the same as he's been used to doing all his life. And from the statements which he lets fall from time to time I gleans that he can't hardly make up his mind which one of the two of them—law or liquor—he's going to favor the most when the pinch comes and the supply in the dineroom cupboard begins running low. Every time he starts off for a little trip somewheres and has to tote a bottle along in his hip pocket instead of being able to walk into a grocery and refresh himself over the bar like he's been

doing for mighty nigh sixty years, I hears him speaking mumbling [1] words to himself. I hears him saying it's come to a pretty pass when a Kentucky gentleman has either got to compromise with his conscience or play a low-down trick on his appetite. Off and on it certainly does pester him mightily.

But just about the middle of the present summer he gets a letter from his married niece, her which used to be Miss Sally Fanny Priest but is now married to a Yankee gentleman named Fairchild and living in Denver, Colorado. Miss Sally Fanny is the closest kin-folks the old judge has got left in the world; and she ups and writes to him and invites him to come on out there where she lives and stay a spell with them and then toward winter go along with her to a place called Bermuda which it seems like from what she says in the letter, Bermuda is one of these here localities where you can still keep on having a toddy when you feels like it without breaking the law.

So he studies about it awhile and then he

[1] Note by Jeff's amanuensis.—In the part of the Union from which Jeff hails and among his race the word *mumbling* denotes complaint, peevishness, a querulous utterance.

says to me one night he believes he'll go, which he does along about four weeks ago, leaving me behind to sort of look out for the home place out on Clay Street. My wages goes on the same as if he was there, and I has but little to do, but the place seems mighty lonesome to me without the old boss-man pottering 'round doing this and that and the other thing. I certainly does miss seeing the sight of him. Every time I walks through the front part of the house, and it all empty and closed up and smelling kind of musted, and sees his old umbrella hanging on the front hall hat-rack where he forgot and left it there the day he went away, I gets a sort of a low feeling in my mind. It's like having the toothache in a place where there ain't no tooth to have it in.

And I keeps on thinking about the old days when he'd be setting out on the front porch as night-time come on, with some of them old-time friends of his dropping in on him, and me bringing them drinks from the sideboard, and them laughing and smoking and joking and carrying on; or else maybe

talking about the Confederate War and the Battle of Shiloh and all. But most of them is now dead and gone and the old judge is away out yonder in Denver, Colorado, a-many and a-many a mile from me; and all I can hear as I comes up the walk from the front gate after dark is the katy-dids calling in the silver-leaf trees and all I can hear when I unlocks the door and goes inside is one of them old chimney swifts up the chimney, going: *"Whoosh, whoosh, whoosh!"* I've took notice before now that an empty house which it has always been empty ain't half so lonesome for you to be in it as one which has been lived in by people you knowed but they have now gone entirely away.

So, after about two weeks of being alone, I gets so restless I feels like I can't stand it very much longer without breaking loose someway. So one Sunday about half past two o'clock in the evening, I'm going on past a young white gentleman by the name of Mr. Dallas Pulliam's house and he comes out on his front porch and calls over to me and tells me to come on in there

'cause he wants to talk to me about something. So I crosses over from the other side of the street and walks up to the porch steps and takes off my hat and asks him how he is getting along and he says he ain't got no complaint and he asks me how is I getting along my own self and I tells him just sort of toler'ble so-and-so, and then he says to me how would I like to take a trip to New York City? I thinks he must be funning. But I says to him, I says:

"How come New York City, Mr. Dallas?"

So he tells me that here lately he's been studying a right smart about going to New York and staying there a spell on a sort of a vacationlike, and if he likes it maybe he'll settle there and go into business. He says he's about made up his mind to take some likely black boy along with him for to be his body-servant and look after his clothes and things and everything and he's thinking that maybe I might be the one to fill the bill; and then he says to me:

"How about it, Jeff—want to go along

and give the big town the once-over or not?"

I then sees he is not funning but is making me a straight business proposition. I thanks him and says to him that I has ever had the crave to travel far and wide and that I likewise has often heard New York spoke of as a very pleasant place to go to, by them which has done so, and also a place where something or other is going on most of the time. But I says to him I'm afraid I can't go on account I'm under obligations to Judge Priest by reasons of us having been together so long and him having left me in complete utter charge of our house. He says, though, he thinks maybe he can attend to that part of it all right; he says he'll write a letter to the Judge specifying about what's come up and he's pretty sure it can be fixed up so's I can go. He says if I don't like the job after I gets there, he'll pay my way back home again any time I wants to come, or when the old judge needs me, either one. He says he ain't adopting me, he's just borrowing me.

I always has liked Mr. Dallas Pulliam,

him being one of the most freehanded young white gentlemen in town. Of course, off and on, I've heard the rest of the white folks hurrahing him behind his back about the way he's handled all that there money which was left to him here a few years back when his paw died. There was that time when he bought a sugar plantation down in Louisiana, sight onseen, and when he went down to see it, couldn't do so without he'd a-done a whole heap of bailing-out first, by reason of its being under three feet of standing water. Anyway, that's what I heard tell; thought I reckon it wasn't noways as bad as what some of the white folks let on. And there was that other time only a few months back when he decided to start up a buggy-factory. I overhears Judge Priest speaking about that one day to Dr. Lake.

"That young man, Dallas Pulliam, certainly is a sagacious and a farseein' person," he says. "Jest when automobiles has got so cheap that every hill-billy in the county kin afford to own at least one, he's fixin' to go into the buggy-factory business on an extensive scale. Next time I run into him I'm

goin' to suggest to him that when the buggy trade seems to sort of slack up, ez possibly it may, that instid of layin' off his hands he might start in to turnin' out flint-lock muskets fur the U. S. Army."

I suspicions that Judge Priest or somebody else must have spoke to Mr. Dallas along those lines because he didn't go into the buggy business after all. For the past several months he ain't been doing much of anything, so far as I knows of, except pranking 'round and courting Miss Henrietta Farrell.

Well, white folks may poke their fun at him unbeknownst, but he's got manners suitable to make him popular with me. He's the kind of a white gentleman that's this here way: He'll wear a new necktie or a fancy vest about three or four times and then he'll get tired of it and pass it on to the first one which comes along. Moreover, him and me is mighty near the same size and I knows full well in advance, just from looking at him that Sunday evening standing there on his porch, that the very same suit of clothes which he's got on then

will fit me without practically no alterations. It's a checked suit, too, and mighty catchy to the eye. So right off I tells him if Judge Priest gives his free will and consent I'll certainly be down at the depot when that there old engine whistle blows for to get aboard for New York City. Which he then asks me for Miss Sally Fanny's address and promises he'll write out there that very night to find out can I go.

It's curious how news does travel 'round in a place that's the right size for everybody in it to know everybody else's business. Before night it has done leaked out somehow that I is seriously considering accepting going to New York with young Mr. Dallas Pulliam; and by next morning, lo and behold, if it ain't all over town! Wherever I goes, pretty near everybody I meets, whites and blacks alike, asks me how about it and allows I'm powerful lucky to get such a chance. Mostly, in times gone by, when my race goes North they heads for Chicago, Illinois, or maybe Detroit, Michigan, or Indianapolis, Indiana. No sooner

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do they get there than they begins writing back saying that up North is the only fitten place for colored folks to be at; wages high, times easy, and white folks calling you "Mister" and everything pleasant like that. They writes that there is not no Jim Crow cars nor separate seats for colored at the moving-pictures nor nothing like that. But I has taken notice that after awhile most of 'em quits writing back and starts coming back. Some stays but more returns—and is verging on shouting-happy when they crosses the Ohio River coming in. From what I hears some of 'em say after they gets home and has got a full meal of vittles inside of them, and so is got more time to talk, I has made up my mind that so far as my own color is concerned, the main difference from the South is this: Up North they calls you "Mister" but they don't feed you!

Still, New York City ain't Chicago, Illinois, nor yet it ain't Detroit, Michigan; and besides, working for Mr. Dallas Pulliam, I won't have to be worrying about when does I eat next. Still, even so, I says to my-

self that it won't be no harm to inquire round now that the word is done leaked out anyhow, and learn something more than what little I knows about New York City. But it seems like, outside of some few white folks, there is not nobody I knows who's ever been there, excusing a few head of draft-boys which went there enduring of the early part of the war; and they wouldn't scarcely count neither on account of them just passing through and not staying over only just a short time whilst waiting for the boat to start. Howsomever, they tells me, one and all, that from what they did see of it they is willing to recommend it very highly.

One or two of the white gentlemen which I is well acquainted with, they tells me the same, too. Mr. Jere Fairleigh he takes me into his law office when I meets him on the street and speaks to him about it; and he gets a book all about New York down off of one of his shelves and he reads to me where the book says that in New York there is more of these here Germans than there is in any German city except one, and more

Russians than there is in any Russia city except none, and more Italians than there is in any Italy city except one, and more Hungarians than there is in any Hungry city at all, and so on and so forth. I says to him, I says:

"Mr. Jere, it seems lak they is mo' of ever' nation in Noo Yawk 'en whut they is anywhars else. But they does not 'pear to be nothin' said 'bout 'Merikins. How come, suh?"

He says he reckons there's so few of them there that the man which wrote the book didn't figure it was worth while putting them in. Still, he says I'll probably run into somebody once in awhile which speaks the United States language.

" 'Most every policeman does," he says, "I understand it's the law that they have to be able to speak it before they'll let 'em go on the force, so as they can understand the foreigners that come over from the mainland of North America to visit in New York."

The way he looks—so sort of serious—when he says that, I can't tell if he's in earn-

est or not. I judges, though, that he's just having his fumdiddles with me. And then he goes on and tells me that the biggest of everything and the tallest and the richest and the grandest is found there and if I don't believe it is, I can just ask any New Yorker after I gets there and he'll tell me the same.

So, taking one thing with another, I'm mighty much pleased when the word comes along in about a week from then that the old judge says I can go and sends me his best wishes and a twenty-dollar bill as a parting gift and friendship offering. He says in the letter, which Mr. Dallas reads to me, to tell me to be sort of careful about sampling the stock of liquor and cigars on the sideboard of any New York family when I'm in their house, and also not to start in wearing a strange Yankee gentleman's clothes without telling him about it first. He says people up there probably don't understand local customs as they have ever prevailed down our way, and if I ain't careful, first thing I know there'll be a skinny black nigger named Jeff locked up

in the county jail hollowing for help and not no help handy.

But that's just the old boss-man's joke. He always is been the beatenest one for twitting me about little things around the house! Mr. Dallas he knows how to take what the Judge says and so does I and we has quite a laugh together over the letter.

And lessen twenty-four hours from that time we is both all packed up and on our way, New York bound, me wearing one of Mr. Dallas' suits of clothes which I figures he ain't had it on his back more than five or six times before altogether. It's a suit of a most pleasing pattern, too. And cut very stylish, with a belt in the back.

CHAPTER II

North Bound

NEXT morning after we gets across into Ohio, Mr. Dallas he fetches me into the Pullman car where he's riding. I finds myself more comfortable there than I has been riding up front in the colored compartment, but lesser easy in my mind. I enjoys the feel of them soft seats and yet I gets sort of uneasy setting amongst so many strange white folks. Still, there ain't nobody telling me to roust myself out from there and after a while I gets more used to being where I now is. Also I gets acquainted with two of the porters, the one on our car and the one on the car which is hitched on next to us. When they ain't busy, we all three gets out in the little porches betwixt the cars and confabs together. 'Course I don't let on to them, but all the time I studies them two boys.

The one on our car, which his given name is Roscoe, is short and chunky and kind of fatted out; he's black as the pots and powerful nappy-headed besides. His head looks like somebody has done dipped it in a kettle of grease and then throwed a handful of buckshot at it and they all stuck. But he's smart; he knows what's service. I sees that plain.

With Roscoe it's this way: A lady gets on board the car. No sooner does she sit down and begin to fumble with the hat-pins than there's old Roscoe standing right alongside of her holding a big paper bag in his hands all opened out for her to put her hat in it and keep it out of the dust. A gentleman setting in the smoking-room reaches in his pocket and gets a cigar out. Before he rightly can bite the end of it off, here is this here same Roscoe at his elbow with a match ready. Roscoe he ain't hanging back waiting for folks to ask him for something and then have them getting all fretful whilst he's running to find whatever 'tis they wants. No sir, not him. He's there with the materials almost before they

is made up their minds what it is they craves next. He just naturally beats 'em to it; which I'll tell the world that's service.

He's powerful crafty about his tips, too. When he does something for a passenger and the passenger reaches in his pocket to get a little piece of chicken-feed out to hand over to Roscoe, he smiles and holds up his hand.

"No, suh," he says to him, "keep yore funds whar they now is, please, suh. There ain't no hurry—we're goin' travel quite a piece together. W'en we gits to whar you gits off, ef you is puffec'ly satisfied wid all whut has been done in yore behalf then you kin slip me a lil' reward, ef you's a-mind to."

He tells me in confidences that working it that-a-way he gets dollars where he would a-got dimes. He calls it his deferred payment plan. He says some months his tips run three times what his wages is. I'll say that old tar-baby certainly is got something in his head besides sockets for his teeth to set in.

The other porter, the one which is on the car next behind, is as different from Roscoe

as day is from night. He calls himself Harold. But I knows just from looking at him that he's too old for such a fancy entitlement as that. 'Cause Harold is a new-issue name amongst us colored, and this here boy must be rising of forty years old, if he's a day. This Harold is yellow-complected and yet he ain't the pure high yellow, neither; he's more the shade of a slice of scorched sponge cake. He's plenty uppidity. And I takes notice that the further North the train goes the more uppidity he gets. He quits saying "No, ma'am," and "Yas, suh," almost before we leaves Cincinnati. He quits saying "Thanky, *suh,*" and he starts saying "*I* thank you," in such a way it sounds like he was actually doing you a favor to accept your two bits. He starts talking back to passengers which complains about something. He acts more and more begrudgeful until it looks like it must actually hurt him to step along and do something which somebody on the train wants done. Along about Pittsburgh he's got so brash that I keeps watching for some white man to rise up and knock that boy's mouth

so far round from the middle of his face it'll look like his side-entrance. But nothing like that don't happen and I is most deeply surprised and marvels greatly. I says to myself, I says:

"Harold," I says, "I aims to git yore likeness well fixed in my mind 'cause I got a presentermint 'at you ain't goin' be 'round yere so very much longer an' I wants to be able to remember how you looked, after you is gone frum us. Some these times you is goin' git yore system mixed an' start bein' biggotty on yore way South an' 'en you is due to wake up at the end of yore run all organized to attend yore own fune'l. Yas, suh, man, w'en you comes to in Newerleans you'll a-been daid fully twelve hours. I kin jest shut my eyes right now an' see the cemetery sexton pattin' you in the face wid a spade."

I talks to him about the way he acts. Course I does not come right out and ask him about it; but I leads him up to it gentle and roundabout. He tells me he don't aim to let nobody run over him. He tells me he considers himself just as good as they is, if

not better. He says he lives in a place called Jersey City where the colored race gets their bounden rights and if they don't get 'em they up and contends for 'em until they do. I says to him, I says:

"Harold," I says, "I ain't never been about nowhars much till this present trip an' I ain't never seen much, so you must excuse of my ign'ence but the way it looks to me, I'd ruther be happy amongst niggers then miser'ble amongst w'ite folks."

He says to me ain't I got no respect for my color? I says to him I's got so much respect for it that I ain't aiming to jam myself into places where I ain't desired. He says that ain't the point; he says the point is that I is got to stand up for the entitled rights and privileges of the colored race. I says where I comes from I also has got to think about keeping from getting my head all peeled. He says to me I'll find out before I has been long up North that there is a sight of difference betwixt Kentucky and New Jersey. I says to him that most doubtless he is right. And then he says I should also be careful about speaking the word

"nigger." He says the word ain't never used no more amongst colored folks which respects themselves. I says to him, I says:

"Huh!" I says. "Well, then, whut does you call a boy w'en you's blabbin' 'long wid him friendly-lak?"

He says it is different when I is strictly amongst my own color, but that I mustn't never speak the word "nigger" in front of white folks nor never allow no white man to call me that and get away with it.

I says:

"Not even ef you is wu'kin' fur him an' he don't call it to you to hurt yore feelin's nor to demean you but jest sez it sociable an' so-an'-so?"

He says:

"Not under no circumstances whutsomever."

I says:

"How is I goin' stop him?"

He says:

"Wid yore fists. Or half of a loose brick. Or somethin'."

I says to Harold:

"Harold," I says, "you shore wuz right

jest now w'en you norrated 'at they wuz a diff'ience betwixt Kintucky an' up-North. Well, live an' learn," I says, "live an' learn. Only, ef I aims to learn frum you I has doubts whether I'll live so ver' much longer."

We talks some more about making money, too. It seems like the closer you gets to New York City the more you thinks about money. I noticed it then and I notices it since, frequent. He says to me that some of the boys in the sleeping-car portering business don't depend just on their wages and their tips alone. He says they has another way for to pick up loose change. He says he don't follow after it himself; he says he has got one or two other boys in mind which he has talked with 'em and knows how they does it.

I says to him, I says:

"Specify?"

He says:

"The way these yere boys gits they money is 'at they gits it late at night after ever'body has done went to baid. Most gin'elly a man 'at's travelin' he don't keep track of his loose

change. Anyhow, he don't keep near ez close track of it ez he do w'en he's home. He's buyin' hisse'f a cigar yere an' a paper-back book there an' a apple in this place an' a sandwitch in 'at place, an' he jest stick the change in his pants pocket an' goes on 'bout his bus'ness. Well, come baid-time, he turns in. We'll say you is the porter on his car. You goes th'ough the car till you comes to his berth. You parts the curtains jest ez easy ez you kin an' you peeps in th'ough the crack an' see ef he's sleepin' good. Ef his pants is all folded up smooth you better ramble along an' leave 'at man be. Folded pants is most gine'lly a sign of a careful man w'ich the chances is he knows how much he's got to a cent. But ef his pants is kind of wadded-up in the lil' ham-mock or flung to one side sort of keerless-lak, you reaches in an' you lifts 'em out. But fust you wants to be shore he's sleepin' sound. Them w'ich sleeps on the back wid the mouth open is the safetest."

I says to him, I says:

"Yes, but s'posen' he do wake up an' ketch

you fumblin' 'round insides of his berth. Whut then?"

"Oh," he says, "tha's all purvided fur in the ritual. You sez to him: ' 'Scuse me, mister, I med a mistake. I thought you wuz the gen'lman 'at lef' a early call fur to git off at Harrisburg.' But most in gine'l he don't wake up. So you gits his pants out into the aisle an' goes th'ough 'em. Ef he's got somewhars 'round five dollars in loose change in his pockets, you teks fifty cents, no mo' an' no less, an' 'en you slips his pants back whar you found 'em an' go 'long. Ef he's got somewhars 'round ten dollars in chicken-feed an' in ones an' twos, you assesses him dues of jest one dollar even. Ef you plays yore system right an' don't git greedy they ain't one chanc't in a thousand 'at he'll miss the money w'en he wakes up. But," he says, "they's one fatal exception to the rule. W'en you come to him, don't touch a cent of his money no matter how much he's carryin' on him. 'Cause ef you do he's shore to mek a hollow the very fust thing in the mornin' an' next thing you know you's in

trouble an' they's beckonin' you up on the cyarpet."

I says to him, I says:

"Wait a minute," I says. "Lemme see ef I can't name you the exception my own se'f. The exception," I says, "is the w'ite man w'ich he carries all his small change in one of these yere lil' screwed-up leather purses. Ain't it?"

And he says yes, for a fact, that's so. But he says how come I is knowing so much when I ain't never done no portering my own self. And I says to him, a man don't need to be wearing railroading clothes to know that any white man which totes around one of them little tight patent purses knows at all times, sleeping or waking, just exactly how much money he's got.

Well, when we gets to New York City it's morning again. When we comes out of the depot onto the street I takes one look round and I allows to myself that these here New York folks certainly is got powerfully behind someway with their hauling. Excusing the time we had the cyclone down home, I ain't never in my whole life seen

so much truck and stuff and things moving in all different directions at the same time. And people—*who-ee!* Every which-a-way I looks all I can see is a multitude of strangers. And I says to myself there certainly must be a big convention going on in this town for the streets to be so full of visiting delegates and it's a mighty good thing for us Mr. Dallas is done sent a telegram on ahead for rooms at the hotel, else we'd have to camp out with some private family same as they does down home in county-fair week or when the district Methodist conference meets.

The white gentleman that's going to fix up what I writes, he told me that I should set down my first impressions of New York before I begins to forget 'em. He says they'll make good local color, whatever that is. Which I will now do so:

The thing which impresses me first and foremost is a steamboat I sees on the river which runs alongside New York City on the side nearest to Paducah. She is not no side-wheeler nor yet she ain't no stern-wheeler, which all the steamboats I has ever

seen before is naturally bound to be one or the other. As near as I can tell, she has not got no wheel at all, side- or stern-. It would seem that what runs her is a kind of a big hump-back timber which sticks up out of the middle of her hurricane deck and works up and down, and which Mr. Dallas tells me is known as a walking-beam. But it seems like to me that's certainly a most curiousome way to run a steamboat and I says to myself that wonders will never cease!

And the thing which impresses me next most is a snack-stand on a sidewalk where they is selling watermelons by the slice—and it the middle of August!

And next to that the most impressiveness is when I sees a gang of black fellows working on a levee down by this same river, only it's mighty flat-looking for a levee. These boys is working there roustabouting freight, and there ain't a single one of 'em which is singing as he goes back and forth. When a river-nigger down our way don't sing whilst he's loading, it's a sign something is wrong with him and next thing he knows he don't know nothing by reason of the mate having

lammed him across the head with a hickory gad. But this here gang is going along just as dumb as if they was white. I wonders to myself if thereby they is hoping to fool somebody into believing they is white?

I will therefore state that these three things is the things which impresses me the most highly on my first arrival in New York. I also takes notice of the high buildings. They strikes me as being quite high; but of course when you starts in to build a high building, highness is naturally what you aims for, ain't it?

CHAPTER III

Manhattan Isle

THE day we gets to New York is the day before yesterday and we has been on the go so constant ever since and I has seen so much it seems like my ideas is all mixed up together same as a mess of scrambled eggs. The way it looks to me, the mainest difficulty with an author, especially if he's kind of new at the authorizing business, is not so much to find something to write up as 'tis to pick out the special things which should be wrote up and just leave the rest be. So it is now my aim to set forth the main points which sticks out in my mind.

Well, first off, soon as we gets in, we goes to the hotel. Beforehand, Mr. Dallas he says to me it's a quiet hotel up-town; but when we arrives at it I takes a look around and I says to myself that if this here is a

quiet hotel they shore must have to wear ear-mufflers at one of the noisy ones if they hopes to hear themselves think. To begin with, she don't look like no hotel I've ever been used to. She rears herself away up in the air, same as a church steeple, only with windows all the way up, and although the weather is pleasant there is not no white folks setting in chairs under the front gallery. In the first place, there is not nothing which looks like a gallery, excusing it's a little glass to-do which sticks out over the pavement at the main entrance, and if anybody was to try setting there the only way he could save his feet from being mashed off by people trampling on 'em would be for him to have both legs sawed off at the ankles. You'd think that, being up-town, the neighborhood would be kind of quiet, with shade trees and maybe some vacant lots here and there, but, no, sir; it's all built up solid and the crowds is mighty near as thick as what they was down around the depot and in just as much of a hurry to get to wherever it is they is bound for.

Even with all the jamming and all the

excitement going on they must a-been expecting us. The way they fusses over Mr. Dallas is proof to my mind that somebody must a-told 'em in advance that he belongs to the real quality down where we comes from, and I certainly is puffed up with pride to be along with him. Because if he had been the King of Europe they could not have showed him no higher honors than what they does.

No sooner does we pull up at the curbstone in front than a huge big tall white man dressed up something like a Knights of Templar is opening the taxihack door for us to get out; and two or three white boys in militia suits comes a-running at his call and snatches the baggage away from me; and another member of the Grand Lodge, in full uniform, is standing just inside the front door to give us the low bow of welcome as we walks into a place which it is all done up with marble posts and with red wallpaper on the walls and gold chicken-coops on every side until it puts me in mind of a country nigger's notion of Heaven. Over at the clerk's enclosure three

white men is waiting very eager to receive us, which each and every one of 'em is wearing his dress-up clothes with a standing collar and long-tailed coat the same as though he was fixing to be best man at a wedding or pall-bearer at a funeral or something else extra special and fancy. For all it's summer-time there is not nobody loafing round there in his shirt sleeves—I bet you there ain't!

One of the pall-bearing gentlemen shoves the book round for Mr. Dallas to write his name in it and the second one he reaches for the keys and the third one he looks to see if there is not some mail or telegrams for him. It takes no lessen a number than three of them white boys in the soldier clothes to escort Mr. Dallas upstairs and a fourth one he grabs up my valise and takes me on an elevator to the servants' annex. He don't have to run the elevator himself, neither. There's another hand just to do that alone and all my white boy is got to do is wrestle my baggage. It's the first time in my life ever I has had a white person toting my belongings for me and it makes me feel kind

of abovish and important. Also, I takes notice that when he gets to my room he keeps hanging round fussing with the window shade and first one thing and then another, same as if he was one of the bell-boys at the hotel down home waiting on a traveling man. Course he's lingering round till he gets his tip. For quite a spell I lets him linger on and suffer. I lets on like I don't suspicion what he's hanging about that-away for. Then I slips him two-bits and I don't begrudge it to him, neither, account of it giving me such a satisfactory feeling to be high-toning a white boy.

I says to myself that if this here is the annex where they boards the transom [1] help, what must the main part of the hotel where the regular guests stays at be like? Because my room certainly is mighty stylish-looking and full of general grandeur. But I ain't got no time to be staying there and enjoying the furniture, because I knows Mr. Dallas will be needing me for to come and wait on him. So I starts right out to find him and it seems like I travels half a mile through

[1] Note.—It is believed that Jeff meant "transient."

them hallways before I does so. He's got a big setting-room all to himself and a fashionable bedroom and a special bath and a little special hall and all.

I says to him, I says:

"Mr. Dallas, they shore must be monstrous set-up over havin' you pick out they hotel fur us to stop at. Look how the reception committee turned out fur you downstairs in full regalia? Look how they mouty nigh broke they necks fur to usher you in in due state? And now ef they ain't done gone an' 'sign you to the bridal chamber an' give you the upstairs parlor fur yore own use, mo' over! It p'intedly indicates to me 'at they sets a heap of store by you."

He sort of laughs at that.

"Why, Jeff," he says, "if you think this is a fine lay-out you should see some of the other *suites* they have here."

I says:

"I ain't cravin' to see 'em. I done seen sweetness 'nuff ez 'tis. They su'ttinly is usin' us noble."

He says they should ought to use us noble

seeing what the price is they charges us. He says:

"Do you know what I'm paying here for the accommodations for the two of us? I'm paying twenty-seven dollars and a half."

I says to him if that's the case he better let me clear out of there right brisk and skirmish round and find me a respectable colored boarding house somewheres handy by, so's to cut down the expenses, because, I don't care what anybody says, twenty-seven dollars and a half is a sight of money to be paying out every week.

He says:

"Twenty-seven and a half a week—huh! Remember, Jeff, we are in New York now where everything runs high. This stands me twenty-seven and a half a day."

I says to him, I says:

"Who-ee!" I says. "No wonder they kin purvide fancy garments fur all the hands an' buy solid gold bars fur the cage whar they keeps them clerks penned up. Mr. Dallas," I says, "it shore is behoovin' on us to eat hearty th'ee times a day in awder

fur to git our money's worth whilst we's boardin' yere."

He says, though, for me not to overtax my appetite just on that account because the eating is besides; he says we pays twenty-seven dollars and a half a day just for our rooms.

I says to him, I says:

"Mr. Dallas, let's git out of yere befo' they begins chargin' us up fur the air we breathes!"

He says:

"You're too late with your suggestion; they do charge us for that. The air is all cleaned and cooled before it comes into these rooms."

Then I knows for sure he is burlesqueing me. Who's going to hold the air whilst they cleans it? And the Good Lord Himself can't chill air to order in the middle of a August hot spell, let alone a lot of folks running a hotel—can He? I asks Mr. Dallas them questions.

But he just laughs and say to me that there's not no need to worry, because he won't be staying there only just a day or

so. He says Mr. H. C. Raynor, which is his principalest friend in New York and the one which he's thinking about maybe going into business with, has done devised for us to hire some ready-furnished quarters still higher up-town. He says something about 'em being Sublette quarters in a department-house; leastwise that's what I makes out of what he says. That's news to me in more ways than one because, in the first place, I didn't know any of the Sublettes, which is a very plentiful white connection in our county, had done moved up here to live, and in the second place it seemed like to me there just naturally couldn't be no more up-town to New York City than what I already had done observed coming from the train.

He goes on to say he is expecting to hear from the gentleman almost any minute now and then he'll know better what the program is. Almost before he gets the words out of his mouth the telephone bell rings and sure enough, it is this here Mr. Raynor which is on the wire, and it turns out that the place where we're going is ready for us

now on account of the folks which owns it having gone away sooner than what they expected, and the further tidings is that we can move up there that same day, which we does—along about an hour before supper-time. I notices they don't make near as much fuss over us going thence from there as they did whilst ushering of us in. I judges the man what owns the hotel must be feeling kind of put-out about losing of all that there money which we'd be paying him had we a-stayed on.

We gets into a taxihack and we rides for what seems like to me it's several miles and still are not nowheres near the outskirts as far as I can judge, and when finally we gets to the new location I has another astonishment. For here all day I've been expecting we'd land at a private residence but this place to which we've come at don't look like no private residence to me. It's more like the hotel we just left only more bigger and mighty near as tall. In all other respects additional it certainly is a grand establishment.

It's got a kind of a private road so's car-

riages can drive in under shelter off the sidewalk and 'way back inside is a round piece of ground all fixed up with solid marble benches and little cedar trees and flowerbeds, like a cemetery. I thinks to myself that maybe this here is the private burying-plot for the owner's family; but still there ain't no tombstones in sight excepting one over the front door with words cut on it, and since I figures I has done showed ignorance enough for one day, I don't ask no fool questions about it. The help here also wears fancy clothes, but is my own color. I'm glad of that because I counts now on having some black folks to get acquainted with and to talk to; but just as soon as one of 'em opens his mouth and speaks I knows they is not my kind even if they is my complexion. Because he don't talk like no white folks ever I knowed and yet he don't talk like none of the black folks does at home. Still, just from his conversation I can place him. There was two just like him which was brought along once by a Northern family staying in our town but they didn't linger long amongst us. They

didn't like the place and no more the place didn't like them. They claimed they was genuine West Indians, whatever that is, and they made their brags constant that they also was British subjects. But Aunt Dilsey Turner she always said they looked more like objects to her. Aunt Dilsey, which she was Judge Priest's cook for going on twenty years, is mighty plain-spoken about folks and things which she don't fancy. And she did not fancy these two none whatsomever.

When we gets upstairs to our section I'm sort of disappointed in it. The furniture ain't new and shiny like what I naturally expected 'twould be. Most of it is kind of old and dingy and hacked-up-looking. The curtains at the setting-room windows is all frayed-like and mighty near wore through in spots. And the Sublette family must a-run out of money before they got round to buying the carpets because they is not no carpets at all but only a passel of old faded rugs scattered about the floor here and there. Some of the chairs—the best company chairs, too—is so old they is actually decrepit. I'd say that by rights they be-

longed in a second-hand store, or leastways up in the attic. Moreover, they ain't no upstairs to our department nor yet there is not no downstairs nor no cellar, but instead, everything, kitchen, pantry, and the rooms for the help and all, runs on one floor. But Mr. Dallas he deports himself like he is satisfied and it ain't for me to be finding fault if he sees fitten not to find any.

Anyway, I is so busy for a little while flying round and getting things unpacked that I has no time to utter complaints. Pretty soon, though, I has to knock off hanging up Mr. Dallas' suits to mix a batch of cocktails from the private stock he has brought along with him in one of his trunks, because this here Mr. Raynor he telephones he's bringing some of his friends for a round of drinks with Mr. Dallas and then Mr. Raynor says they'll ride out in his motor-car to a road-house to get 'em some dinner. I takes his message off the telephone and I knows that's what he says, surprising though it do sound.

That's a couple of new ones on me—eating dinner when it's already mighty near

past supper-time and eating it at a road-house, too! I says to myself that New York City is getting to act more curiouser to me every minute I stays in it. Because the only road-house ever I knowed of by that name used to stand alongside the toll-gate just outside the corporation limits on the Mayfield road and the old white man which collected the tolls lived in it, his name being Mr. Gip Bayless. But the gate is done torn down since the public government taken over the gravel roads, and anyhow, even in its most palmiest days, none of the quality wouldn't never think of stopping there at that little old rusty house for their vittles. They'd mighty near as soon think of having a picnic at the pest-house.

Still and notwithstanding, Mr. Dallas ain't indicating no surprise when I conveys to him what Mr. Raynor says, so I reflects to myself that if toll-gate houses up here is in proportion to everything else this one which they're aiming to go to, must probably be about the size of a county court-house, with a slate roof on it and doubtless a cupola. So I just gets busy and mingles

up a batch of powerful tasty cocktails in the shaker. I knows they is tasty from a couple of private samples which I pours off for myself out in the pantry. My experience has been that the only way you can tell is a cocktail just right is to taste it from time to time as you goes along.

Immediately soon here comes Mr. Raynor with his friends which there is four of them, besides himself—one other gentleman named Bellows and three ladies. One of the ladies is older than the other two, but decorated more younger, if anything, than what they is. Introducing her to Mr. Dallas, Mr. Raynor says her name is Mrs. Gaylord but they all calls her Jerry. She's pretty near entirely out of eyebrows, but she has got more than a bushel of hair which is all kind of frozen-looking and curled up tight on her head. It don't look natural to me and I knows it ain't natural a little bit later when Mr. Raynor sets down on the arm of her chair and throws his arm around her sort of offhand and sociable-like, and she up and tells him for Heaven's sake to be careful and not muss her up because she

says she's only just that day spent forty dollars and four hours getting a permanent wave put in.

At that I says to myself, I says:

"Well, betwixt w'ites an' blacks we su't-tinly is mekin' the world safe fur them beauty doctors. Niggers down South spendin' all the money they kin rake an' scrape togither gittin' the kinkiness tuck out of they haids an' fashionable ladies up yere spendin' their'n gittin' it put in! It's a compliment to one race or the other, but jest w'ich I ain't purpared to say."

The other ladies is named Miss O'Brien and Miss DeWitt but it's kind of hard for me at first to remember which from which seeing that the rest of the party scarcely ever calls 'em anything except Pat and Bill-Lee. They is both mighty nice and friendly but they is exclusively different one from the other. Miss Pat she's got her hair chopped off short like a little boy's and she acts kind of like a boy does, too—free and easy and laughing a lot and smoking a cigarette so natural that it's like as if she must a-been born with one in her mouth and it

lighted. And yet for all that, I seems to get the impression that way down underneath she's kind of tired of herself and everything around her.

But this here Miss DeWitt she is tall and slender and kind of quiet. She must a-been feeling poorly lately because her face is just dead-white and her lips is still bright red from the fever and when she sets down in a chair she just seems to kind of fall back into it, all limp-like. She ain't saying much with her mouth but she does a sight of talking with her eyes which is big and black and sort of lazy-like most of the time. She sure is decked up with jewelry like the Queen of Sheba, too. She's got big heavy necklaces round her neck and great long ear-rings in her ears and many bracelets on both her arms. She's even got two big bracelets clamped round one of her ankles, which I judges she didn't have room for 'em nowheres else and so put 'em there to keep from losing 'em; and when she moves the jewelry all jingles freely and advertises her. She walks with a kind of a limber swimming gait, soft and glideful; of

course it ain't exactly like swimming and yet that's the only way I can designate what her walking puts me in mind of. She wears dead black clothes and that makes her paleness seem all the more so.

Right from the first jump I can see that Mr. Dallas is drawed to her powerful, and I thinks to myself that if he's fixing to favor this here languid lady with his attentions it proves he's got a changeable taste because she ain't nothing at all similar to Miss Henrietta Farrell, which she is the one that he's been courting these past few months down in Kentucky. In fact, she's most teetotally unsimilar.

This Mr. Bellows which came with Mr. Raynor he don't detain my attention much. If he wasn't there you wouldn't scarcely miss him; and when he is there you don't scarcely observe him. He makes me think of a neat haircut and nothing else. You just appreciate him being present and that's all. But I studies Mr. Raynor every chance I gets, the more especially because he's the one which is more or less responsible for us having come North. He's very cheering in

his ways; laughing and whooping out loud at everything and poking fun and telling Mr. Dallas that he must be good friends with Mr. Bellows and the three ladies because they is all four of 'em his friends. But I takes note that when he laughs he don't laugh with his eyes but only with his mouth, and when he sort of smiles to himself, quiet-like, it puts me in mind of a man drawing a knife. I can't keep from having a kind of a feeling when I looks at him!

Well, they imbibes up all the cocktails that I has waiting for them and a batch more which I makes by request and then they packs up a couple of bottles—one Scotch and one Bourbon—to take along with 'em for to refresh themselves with at the roadhouse and off they puts. And the last thing I hears as they goes down the hall is Mr. Raynor still laughing from off the top of his palates and the sickly one, Miss DeWitt's necklaces and things all jingling like a road-gang. Mr. Dallas he calls back to me from the elevator that I needn't wait up for him because it is liable to be pretty late when he gets in. But it's a good thing I

does wait up, dozing off and on between times, because when he arrives back, along about half past three in the morning, he certainly does need my assistance getting his clothes off of him. Not since Dryness come in has I seen a young white gentleman more thoroughly overtaken than what he is. And we got a-plenty vigorous drinkers down our way, too! And always did have!

So then I goes to bed myself and that's the end of our first day. And the following day, which it was yesterday, is the day I gets lost.

Which I will tell about that, next.

CHAPTER IV

Harlem Heights

WELL, in the morning I arranges a snack of nuturious breakfast on a tray and takes it in to Mr. Dallas. But he ain't craving nothing solid to eat. He's just craving to lay still and favor his headache. Soon as he opens his eyes he starts in groaning like he's done got far behind with his groaning and is striving for to catch up. And I knows he must a-felt powerful good last night to be feeling so bad this morning. Misery may love company, as some say it do, but I takes notice that very often she don't arrive till after the company is gone.

He tells me to take them vittles out of his sight and fix him up about a gallon of good cold ice-water and set it alongside his bed in easy reach and then I can leave him be where he is and go on out for awhile and

seek amusement looking at the sights and scenes of New York City. But when I gets to the door he calls out to me I better make it two gallons. Which I knows by that he ain't so far gone but what he still can joke.

So I goes on out, just strolling along in a general direction, a-looking at this and admiring of that; and there certainly is a heap for to see and for to admire. The houses is so tall it seems like the sky is resting almost on the tops of 'em and it's mighty near the bluest sky and the clearest ever I seen. It makes you want to get up there and fly round in it. But down below in the street there ain't so very much brightness by reasons of the buildings being so high they cuts off the daylight somewhat. It's like walking through a hollow betwixt steep hills.

People is stirring around every which-a-way, both on foot and in automobiles; and most of the automobiles is all shined up nice and clean like as if the owners was going to take part in an automobile parade in connection with the convention. Everybody is extensively well-dressed, too, but

most all is wearing a kind of a brooding look like they had family troubles at home or something else to pester 'em. And they ain't stopping one another when they meets and saying ain't it a lovely morning and passing the time of day, like we does down home. Even some of them which comes out of the same house together just goes bulging on without a word to nobody, and I remarks to myself that a lot of the neighbors in this district must a-had a falling-out amongst themselves and quit speaking. The children on the sidewalk ain't playing much together, neither. Either they plays off by themselves or they just walks along with their keepers.

And there is almost as many dogs as there is children, mostly small, fool-looking dogs; and the dogs is all got keepers, too, dragging 'em on chains and jerking 'em up sharp when they tries to linger and smell round for strange smells and confab with passing dogs. Near as I can make out, the dogs here ain't allowed to behave like regulation dogs, and the children mainly tries to act like as if they was already growed-

up, and the growed-up ones has caught the prevailing glumness disease and I is approximately almost the only person in sight that's getting much enjoyment out of being in New York.

All of a sudden I hears the dad-blamedest *blim-blamming* behind me. I turns round quick and here comes the New York City paid fire department going to a fire. The biggest fire-engine ever I sees goes scooting by, tearing the road wide open and making a most awful racket. Right behind comes the hook-and-ladder wagon with the firemen hanging onto both sides of it, trying to stick fast and put their rubber coats on at the same time; and right behind it comes a big red automobile, *lickety-split.* Setting up alongside the driver of it is a gentleman in blue clothes and brass buttons, which he's got a big cigar clamped betwixt his teeth and looks highly important. But he ain't wearing a flannel shirt open at the throat, but has got his coat on and it buttoned up, so I assumes it can't be the chief of the department but probably must be the mayor. And in les-

sen no time they all has swung off into a side street, two squares away, with me taking out after 'em down the middle of the street fast as I can travel.

Now, every town where I've been at heretofore to this, when the fire-bell rings everybody drops whatever they is doing and goes to the fire. Elsewhere from New York, enjoying fires is one of the main pleasures of people; but soon I is surprised to see that I'm pretty near the only person which is trailing along after the department. Whilst I'm still wondering over this circumstance, but still running also, a police grabs me by the arm and asks me where is I going in such a big hurry?

I tells him I is going to the fire. And he says to me that I might as well slow up and save my breath because it's liable to be quite a long trip for me. I asks him how come, and he says the fire is probably three or four miles from here and maybe even considerable further than that. And I says to him, that must make it mighty inconvenient for all concerned, having the fires so far away from the engine-house.

At that he sort of chuckles and tells me to be on my way, but to keep my eyes open and not let the cows nibble me. Well, as I says to myself going away from him, I may be green, but I is getting some enjoyment out of being here which is more'n I can say for some folks round these parts, judging by what I has seen up to this here present moment.

So I meanders along, looking at this and that, and turning corners every once in awhile; and after a spell it comes to me that I has meandered myself into an exceedingly different neighborhood from the one I started out from. The houses is not so tall and is more or less rusty-looking; and there's a set of railroad tracks running through, built up on a high trestle; and whilst there has been a falling-off in dogs there has been an ample increase in children; the place just swarms with 'em. These here children is running loose all over the sidewalks and out in the streets, too, but it seems like to me they spends more time quarreling than what they does playing. Or maybe it sounds like quarreling because

they has to hollow so loud on account of all the noises occurring round 'em.

I decides to go back, but the trouble is I don't rightly know which is the right way to turn. I've been sashaying about so, first to the right and then to the left, that I ain't got no more sense of direction than one of these here patent egg-beaters. So I rambles on, getting more and more bewilded-like all the time, till I comes to another police and I walks up to him and states my perdicterment to him very polite and tells him I needs help getting back to where I belongs at.

He looks at me very strict, like he can't make up his mind whether he'd better run me in for vagromcy or let me go, and then he says, kind of short:

"Make it snappy, then. Where d'ye live?"

I tells him I has done forgot the name of the street, if indeed I ever heard it, but from the looks of it I judges it must be the chief resident street where the best families resides. I tells him we has just moved in there, Mr. Dallas Pulliam and me, and

has started up housekeeping in the department-house which stands on the principal corner. I tells him it's the department-house where the inmates all lives in layers, one upon top of the other, like martins in a martin box.

"You mean apartment-house," he says; "department store, but apartment-house. Well, what's the name of this apartment-house, then, if you can't remember the street?"

That makes me scratch under my hat, too. 'Cause I pointedly doesn't know that neither.

"Nummine the name, boss," I says, "jest you, please suh, tell me whar'bouts is the leadin' apartment-house of this yere city of Noo Yawk; that'll be it—the leadin'est one. 'Cause Mr. Dallas Pulliam he is accustom' to the best whar'ever he go."

But he only acts like he's getting more and more impatient with me.

"Describe it," he says, "describe it! There's one chance in a thousand that might help. What does it look like?"

So I tells him what it looks like—how

a little private road winds in and circles round a little place which is like a family-burying-ground, and about the hands downstairs at the front door all being from West Indiana, and about there being two elevators for the residenters and one more for the help, and about us having took over the Sublette family's outfit and all.

"No use," he says, when I gets through, "that sounds just like most of the expensive ones." He starts walking off like he has done lost all interest in my case. Then he calls back to me over his shoulder:

"I'll tell you what's the matter with you," he says; "you're lost."

"Yas, suh," I says; "thanky, suh—tha's whut I been suspicionin' my own se'f," I says, "but I'm much oblige' you agrees wid me."

Still, that ain't helping much, to find out this here police thinks the same way I does about it. Whilst I is lingering there wondering what I better do next, if anything, I sees a street-car go scooting by up at the next crossing, and I gets an idea. If street cars in New York is anything like they is at

home, sooner or later they all turns into the main street and runs either past the City Hall or to the Union Depot. So I allows to myself that I'll go on up yonder and climb aboard the next car which comes along and stay on her, no matter how far she goes, till she swings back off the branch onto the trunk-line, and I'll watch out then, and when she goes past our corner I'll drop off. Doing it that-a-way I figures that sooner or later I'm bound to fetch up back home again.

Anyhow, the scheme is worth trying, 'specially as I can't seem to think of no better one. So I accordingly does so.

But I ain't staying on that car so very long; not more than a mile at the most. The reason I gets off her so soon is this: All at once I observes that I is skirting through a district which is practically exclusively all colored. On every side I sees nothing but colored folks, both big and little. Seemingly, everything in sight is organized by and for my race—colored barber-shops, colored undertaking parlors, colored dentists' offices, colored doctors'

offices. On one corner there is even a colored vaudeville theatre. And out in the middle of the streets stands a colored police. Excusing that the houses is different and the streets is wider, it's mighty near the same as being on Plunkett's Hill of a Saturday evening. I almost expects to see that there Aesop Loving loafing along all dressed up fit to kill; or maybe Red Hoss Shackleford setting in a doorway following after his regular business of resting, or old Pappy Exall, the pastor of Zion Chapel, rambling by, with that big stomach of his'n sticking out in front of him like two gallons of chitterlings wrapped up in a black gunny-sack. It certainly does fill me with the homesickness longings!

And then a big black man on the pavement opens his mouth wide, nigger-like, and laughs at something till you can hear him half-a-mile, pretty near it; which it is the first sure-enough laugh I has heard since I hit New York. And right on top of that I catches the smell of fat meat frying somewheres.

I just naturally can't stand it no longer. Anyhow, if I'm predestinated to be lost in New York City it's better I should be lost amongst my own kind, which talks my native language, rather than amongst plumb strangers. I give the conductor the high sign and I says to him, I says:

"Cap'n, lemme off, befo' I jumps off!"

So he rings the signalling bell and she stops and lets me off. And verily, before I has went hardly any distance at all, somebody hails me. I is wandering along, sort of miscellaneous, looking in the store windows and up at the tops of the buildings, when a brown-complected man steps up to me and sticks out his hand and he says:

"Hello thar', Alfred Ricketts!—whut you doin' so fur 'way frum ole Lynchburg?"

I says to him he must a-made a mistake. And he says:

"Go on 'way, boy, an' quit yore foolin'! This is bound to be Alfred Ricketts 'at I uster know down in Lynchburg, Furginia.

Leas'wise, ef 'tain't him it's his duplicate twin brother."

I tells him no, my name ain't Alfred Ricketts—it's Jeff Poindexter from Paducah, and I ain't never been in no place called Lynchburg in my whole life as I knows of.

He looks at me a minute in a kind of an onbelieving way and then he says he begs my pardon, but his excuse is that I'm the exact spit-and-image of this here Alfred Ricketts, which he says he's done played with him many's the time, when they was both boys together. He says he ain't never in all his born days seen two fellows which they wasn't no kin to each other and yet looked so much similar as him and me does. He says the way we favors each other is absolutely unanimous. He asks me to tell him again what my name is and I does so, and then he says to me:

"Whar'bouts you say you hails frum?"

I says:

"Paducah—tha's whar."

He shakes his head kind of puzzled.

"Paducah?" he says. "I ain't never

heared tell of it. Whar is it—Tennessee or Arkansaw?"

I pities his ignorance, but I tells him where Paducah is located at. It seems like the very sound of the name detains his curiosity. He just shoots the inquiring questions at me. He wants to know how big is Paducah and what is its main business, and what river is it on or close to, and what railroads run in there, and a lot more things. So, seeing he's a seeker after truth, I pumps him full. I tells him we not only is got one river at Paducah, we is got two; and I tells him about what railroads we've got running in; and about the big high water of 1913, and about the night-rider troubles some years before that. I tells him a heap else besides; mainly recent doings, such as Judge Priest having retired, and the Illinois Central having built up their shops to double size. Then he excuses himself some more and steps away pretty brisk, and goes into a colored billiard parlor, and I continues on my lonesome way.

But inside of five minutes another fellow

speaks to me, and by my own entitled name, too. Only, this one is a kind of a pale tallow-color with a lot of gold teeth showing and very sporty dressed. He comes busting up to me like he's overjoyed to see me, and says:

"Hello, Jeff Poindexter—w'en did you git yere? You shore is a sight fur the sore eyes! How you leave ever'body down in ole Paduke? An' how does yore own copperosity seem to sagashuate?"

All the time he's saying this he's clamping my hand very affectionate, like I was his long-lost brother or something. I tells him his manner is familiar, but that I can't place him. He acts surprised at that—surprised and sort of hurt-like. He asks me don't I remember George Harris from down home? I tells him the onlyest George Harris of color I remembers is an old man which he does janiting for the First National Bank. And he speaks up very prompt and says that's his uncle which he is named for him and used to live with him out by the Illinois Central shops. He says he really don't blame me so much for

not placing him, because he left there it's going on eight or nine years ago just before the big high water; but he claims he used to meet me frequent, and says I ain't changed much from the time when I used to be working for Judge Priest. He says he's sure he'd a-recognized me if he'd a-met up with me in China, let alone it's New York. He says he's been living up North for quite a spell now, and is chief owner of a pants-pressing emporium down the street a piece, and has a fine trade and is doing well. And then, before I can get a stray word in edgeways, he goes on to speak of several important things which has happened down home of late. I breaks in and asks him how come he keeps such close track of events 'way down there seeing he's been away so long; and he says he's just naturally so dog-gone fond of that town he subscribes regular for one of the local papers and reads it faithful and hence that's how come he keeps up so well with what's going on.

"W'ich, speakin' of papers, 'minds me of somethin'," he says; "it 'minds me 'at

on 'count of readin' the papers so stiddy I has a sweet streak of luck comin' to me this ver' day. I'd lak to tell you 'bout it, Poindexter?"

"Perceed," I says, "perceed."

"I'm goin' to," he says, "but s'posen' fust we gits in off this yere street an' sets down somewhars whar we kin be comfor'able an' not be interrupted. Trouble wid me is," he says, "I knows so dad-blame many people round yere, bein' prominent in business the way I is, 'at ef I stands still more'n a minute somebody is shore to be comin' up an' slappin' me on the back. Does you feel lak a light snack, Poindexter?"

Well, it's getting to be close onto eleven o'clock now and I has not et nothing since breakfast except fifteen cents' worth of peanut candy, so I tells him I is agreeable. We goes into a restaurant run by, for and with colored, and we sets down by ourselves off at a little table and he insists that he's doing the paying-for on account of my being a boy from his old home-town, and he says for me to go the limit, ordering. So I calls for a bone sirloin and some fried

potatoes and coffee and a mess of hot biscuits and a piece of mushmelon and one thing and another. It seems like, though, he ain't got much appetite himself. He takes just a cup of coffee, and whilst I is eating all of that provender of his generous providing, he tells me about this here streak of luck which has come his way.

First off, he begins by asking me has I heard tell about the Colored Arabian Prince, which he is now staying in New York? I says no. He says then I will be hearing about him if I sojourns long, because the Colored Arabian Prince is the talk of one and all. He's stopping at the Palace Afro-American Hotel, and he's got more money than what he can spend, and he's going round the world studying how black folks lives in every clime, and he's got thousands and thousands of dollars worth of jewelry which he wears constant. But the piece of jewelry which he prizes as the most precious of all, he lost it only yesterday; which it is a solid gold pin shaped like a four-leaf clover with a genuine real Arabian ruby set in the middle

of it. This here gold-tooth boy he tells me this while I is sauntering through the steak. And I can tell from the way he says it that he's leading up to something.

"Yas suh," he says, "yistiddy is w'en he lose it. An' this mornin' he's got a advertisement notice inserted in the cullid newspapers sayin' ez how he stan' ready an' willin' to pay fifty dollars fur its return to the hotel whar he is stoppin' at, an' no questions asted. An' yere 'bout half-an-hour befo' I runs into you, I'm walkin' 'long the street right up yere a lil' ways, an' I sees somethin' shiny layin' in the gutter an' I stoops down an' picks it up, an' ef it ain't the Cullid Arabian Prince's four-leaf clover pin, dog-gone me! An' yere it is, safe an' sound."

And with that he reach in his pocket and pull it out and let me look at it a brief second. And I says to him that I don't begrudge him his good luck none, only I wishes it might a-been me which had found it, because fifty dollars would come in mighty handy. Then I says to him, I says:

"I s'pose you is now on yore way to hand

him back his belongin' an' claim the reward?"

But he shakes his head kind of dubiousome.

"I tell you how 'tis, Poindexter," he says. "To begin wid, an' speakin' in confidences ez one ole-time frien' to 'nother, I prob'ly is the onlyest pusson in this yere city of Noo Yawk w'ich the Cullid Arabian Prince might mek trouble fur me ef I wuz the one w'ich come bringin' him back his lost pin. Ever since he's been yere he's been sendin' his clothes over to my 'stablishment, w'ich it is right round the corner frum the Palace Afro-American Hotel, to be pressed. An' ef I should turn up now wid this yere pin he'd most likely ez not claim 'at I found it stuck in one of his coat lapels an' taken it out an' kep' it. An' the chances is he'd not only refuse fur to pay over the reward, but furthermo' might raise a rookus an' cast a shadder on my good name w'ich it su'ttinly would hurt my perfessional reppitation fur a Cullid Arabian Prince to be low-ratin' me at-a-way. He's lak so many wealthy pussons is—he's suspicious in his

mind. So I don't keer to take no chances, much ez I craves to feel them fifty dollars warmin' in the pa'm of my hand. But ef a pusson w'ich wuz a puffec' stranger to him wuz to fetch the pin in an' say he wuz walkin' 'long an' seen it shinin' an' picked it up, he'd jes' hand the reward right over widout a mumblin' word."

"Yas," I says, "tha's so, I reckin."

" 'Tain't no manner of doubt but whut hit's so," he says. "Poindexter," he says, brisker-like, "I got an idee—it jest this yere secont come to me: Whut's the reason w'y you can't be the ordained stranger w'ich teks the pin back to him? You does so an' I'll low you ten dollars out of the fifty fur yore time an' trouble. Whut say?"

I studies a minute and then I says I is sociable to the notion. He says he'll go along with me and point out to me the hotel where the Colored Arabian Prince is stopping at and then tarry outside until I gets back to him with the money. I says I'll go just as soon as I has et another piece of mushmelon, which the first piece certainly

was very tasty. So he waits until I has done so and then he pays the check, which comes to one-eighty for me and ten cents for him, and we gets up to start forth. But just as we gets to the door, going out, he takes a look at a clock on the wall and he says:

"I can't go 'long wid you—you'll have to go by yo'se'f."

I says:

"Whyfore you can't go?"

He says:

"I jes' this minute remembers 'at I got to ketch the 'leven-forty-two fur Hartford, Connecticut, whar I is gittin' ready to open up a branch 'stablishment—tha's whyfore. I been enjoyin' talkin' wid somebody frum my own dear state so much 'at I lets the time slip by unbeknownst an' now I jes' about kin git abo'de the train at the up-town station ef I hurries." He scratches his head. "Lemme see," he says, "whut-all is we goin' do 'bout 'at now?" Then it seems like he scratches an idea loose. "I got it," he says. "Mainly on 'count of my bein' in sech a rush, an' you bein' frum my home-

town, I'm goin' mek you a heap sweeter proposition 'en de one w'ich I already has made. I'm goin' halfen this yere reward wid you; 'at's whut I'm goin' do. Yere's the plan: You jes' hands me over twenty-five dollars now fur my sheer an' 'en you keeps the ontire fifty w'ich he'll pay you. See? I knows I is a fool to be doin' it, but gittin' to Hartford on time today 'll mean a heap mo' to me in the long run 'en whut de diff'unce in the money would. How 'bout it, ole boy?"

I says to him that it listens all right to me, and I'd give him the twenty-five in a minute, only I ain't got it with me. When I says that his face falls so far his under-jaw mighty near grazes the ground, and then he says:

"Well, how much is you got? Is you got twenty—or even fifteen?"

I says I ain't got nothing on me in the way of ready cash, only carfare. But I says I is got something on me that's worth a heap more than twenty-five dollars.

And he says:

"Whut is it?"

I says:

"It's this yere solid gold watch," I says. And I hauls it out and waves it before his eyes. "It's wuth fully forty dollars," I says, "but I ain't needin' it on 'count of havin' a still mo' handsomer one in my trunk, w'ich it wuz give to me by a committee of the w'ite folks two yeahs ago fur savin' a lil' w'ite boy from drowndin' off the upper wharf-boat. You tek the watch an' give me, say ten dollars boot," I says, "an' I'll collect the reward an' thar'by both of us 'll be mekin' money," I says; " 'cause you kin sell the watch anywhars fur not lessen forty dollars. I done been offered 'at fur it befo' now."

He studies a minute and then he says that whilst he ain't doubting my word about the watch being worth that much money, still, business is business, and before he consents we'll have to take it to a jewelry-store half-a-square down the street and have it valued.

I says to him, I says:

"Tha's suitable to me, but," I says, "I thought you wuz in a sweat to ketch a train?"

"I'll tek the time," he says. "I kin hurry an' mek it. Come to think of it," he says, "'at train don't leave the up-town station 'twell 'leven-fifty-fo'. 'Leven-forty-two is w'en she leaves frum down-town."

"I'm glad to hear it," I says, "'cause w'en the jewelry-store man has got th'ough 'zaminin' my watch we kin ast him to look at the pin, too, an' tell us ef it's the genuwine article. It mout possibly be," I says, "'at they wuz two of these yere clover-leaf pins floatin' round loose an' one of 'em a imitation. By havin' it 'zamined 'long wid my watch, we both plays safe."

He stops right dead in his tracks.

"Look yere, Poindexter," he says, "whut's the use of all 'is yere projectin' round an' wastin' of time? You trusts me," he says, "an' I trusts you—tha's fair. Yere, boy, you teks the pin an' collects the reward. I teks the watch an' sells it fur whut I kin git fur it. Le's close the deal 'cause I p'intedly is got to hurry frum yere."

"Hole on!" I says. "How 'bout my ten dollars boot?"

"I'll mek it five," he says.

"Gimme the five," I says.

So he counts out five ones and yells something to me about the Palace Afro-American Hotel being straight down the street about half-a-mile, on the left-hand side, and in another second he's gone from view round the nearest corner.

But I does not go to look for no Afro-American Hotel, nor yet for no Colored Arabian Prince, neither. Something seems to warn me 'twould only be a waste of time, so instead of which, as I steps along, I figures out where I stands in the swap. And it comes to this: I is in to the extent of five dollars in cash, also one dollar and eighty cents' worth of nourishing vittles, and a clover-leaf pin, which it must be worth all of seventy-five cents unless the price of brass has took a big fall.

I is out to the extent of telling one lie about saving a little boy from drowning and also one old imitation-gold watchcase without any mechanical works in it. Likewise and furthermore, I can imagine the look on that gold-tooth nigger's face when

he gets time to take a good look at what he's traded for, and that alone I values at fully two dollars more in private satisfaction to J. Poindexter. So, taking one thing and another, getting lost has been worth pretty close on to ten dollars, besides which it has taught me the lesson that when a trusting stranger goes forth in the Great City he's liable to fall amongst thieves, but if only he stays honest himself and keeps his eye skinned, he cannot possibly suffer no harm at the hands of the wicked deceiver.

CHAPTER V

Local Colored

IT seems like having dealings with designing persons of my own color must-'ve made my mind act more keen. All at once I remembers that I seen the name of our apartment-house carved on a big square tombstone over the front door, and it comes to me that the same's name has got something to do with grist-mills and something to do with lawsuits. I studies and studies and then, like a flash, I gets it:

Wheatley Court.

With this much to work on, the rest is plenty easy. A man in a drugstore consults in a telephone book and gives me the full specifications for getting back to where I has strayed from, which it turns out it is fully three miles away from there in a southeast direction. But I buys an ice-cream soda and a pack of chewing-gum

before I asks the drugstore man for his friendly aid. Already I has took note of the fact that most of the folks in New York acts like they hates to answer your questions without you has done 'em some kind of a favor first. So I places this man under obligations to me by trading with him and then he's willing to help me. That is, he's willing, but he ain't right crazy with joy over the idea of it. If I'd a-bought two ice-cream sodas I think probably he's a-moved more brisk-like. Still, he does it. So, inside of an hour more, what with riding part of the ways on street-cars and walking the rest, I is home again and glad to be there.

Even so, my being gone so long ain't put nobody out, because Mr. Dallas is yet in bed, but is now thinking seriously about getting up. He complains of feeling slightly better than what he did awhile back. Still, he ain't got so very much appetite. Orange juice and black coffee seems ample to satisfy his desires; he also continues to remain very partial to the ice-water. He says he must hurry up and dress

and get outdoors because he's got an engagement to go with one of the ladies which he met the night before and look at a little car which she's thinking about buying it, but wants to get his expert opinion on it first. He don't specify her name, but I guesses it's the puny one of the two—this here Miss Bill-Lee DeWitt.

Whilst I is laying out his clothes for him to put on he calls out to me from the bathroom that I will doubtless be interested to know that we'll be staying on in New York permanent. I asks him how come, and he says he's passed his word to go in partners with this here Mr. H. C. Raynor selling oil-properties.

I says to him, I says:

" 'Scuse me, Mr. Dallas, but it sho' does look lak to me we is movin' powerful fast. Only yistiddy we gits yere, an' today we is fixin' to bust into bus'ness. Tha's travelin'!"

He says you have to move fast in New York if you don't want to get run over and trompled on and I says that certainly is the Gospel truth. And he says when you meets up with an attractive proposition up

here in this country you is just naturally obliged to grab holt of it quick or else somebody else 'll be beating you to it. I feels myself bound to agree with that, too; and then he goes on shaving himself and abusing of his skin for being so tender.

I ponders a spell and then I asks him, sort of casual and accidental-like, when was it that Mr. Raynor displayed this here desirable business notion to him and he give his promise for to enter into it?

"Oh," he says, "it was late last night—after we started back from the road-house. He's going to let me have a full half interest," he says.

I don't say nothing out loud to that. But I casts my rolling eyes up to the ceiling and I says in low tones to myself, I says: *"Uh* huh, uh *huh!"* just like that.

That's all I says. And I makes sure he ain't overhearing me, but all the time I'm doing considerable thinking. I'm thinking that, excusing one of 'em is white folks and the other is mulatto-complected and excusing that one has got decorated teeth and the other one just plain teeth, there's

something mighty similar someway betwixt this here Mr. Raynor and that there colored imposer, which he called himself George Harris. I can't make up my mind whether it's their expressions or the way they looks at you out of their eyes, or the engaging way they both has of being so generous-like on short notice. But it pointedly must be something or other, because when I broods about one I can't keep from brooding about the other.

But, naturally, I keeps all that to myself. After Mr. Dallas has done gone out I fixes myself up something solid to eat and then, along about three o'clock I drifts downstairs and engages in friendly conversation with two of them West Indian boys. Before very long the subject of the educated bones gets introduced into the talk someway, and it so happens I has a set in my pocket and I gets 'em out and sort of cuddles 'em in my hand and rattles 'em gentle; and one of the two boys feels persuaded to suggest that, seeing as the work ain't pressing, us three might ramble on back into a little kind of a store-room back of the main

hall downstairs and make a few passes just to keep the time from hanging heavy on our hands.

Now, privately I has always contended that craps-dice is meant for home folks only. These here foreigners should not never toy with 'em if they expects to get ahead in the world. So the entertainment turns out just like I expected 'twould. When fifteen minutes, or maybe twenty, has gone by very pleasantly there is not no reason why I should linger with 'em, and I piroots back on upstairs taking along with me twenty-two dollars and fifty cents of strange money to get acquainted with the spare change in my pants pocket and leaving them two West Indian delegates holding a grand lodge of sorrow betwixt themselves.

So that is all of undue importance which happens on our second day.

CHAPTER VI

Gold Coast

TIME certainly does flitter by here in little old New York, as I has now taken to calling it. Here it has been nearly six weeks since last I done any authorizing, and a whole heap of things has come to pass since then; yet, when I looks back at it, it seems like 'twas only yesterday when last I held my pen in hand.

Also, in that time I has learned much. When I reflects back on how sorghum-green I was when we landed here off the steam-cars, I actually feels right sorry for myself—not knowing what a road-house was, and figuring that when somebody mentioned sub-let apartments they was describing the name of a family, and getting lost in Harlem the first time I went forth rambling, and all them other fool things which I done and said at the outsetting of

our experiences! No longer ago than last evening I was saying to some of the fellow-members up at the Pastime Colored Pleasure and Recreation Club, on One-Hundred and Thirty-fifth street, that it's a born wonder they didn't throw a loop over me and cart me off to the idiotic asylum for safety keeping till the newness had done wore off.

I must also say for Mr. Dallas that he's progressed very rapid, too. And likewise the new business must be paying him powerful well right from the go-off, because we certainly is rolled up in the lap-robes of luxury and living off the top skimmings of the cream.

Before we has been here a week I notices there's a change taking place in Mr. Dallas. He's beginning to get dissatisfied with things as they is and craving after things as they ain't. Near as I can figure it out, he's caught a kind of restlessness disease which it appears to afflict everybody up in these parts, one way or another. It seems like to me, though, he must a-taken it early and in a violent form.

The first symptoms is when he fetches in

one of these here little slick-headed Japanee boys to do the cooking and et cetera, so's I can wait on him more exclusively. Anyway, that's the reason which he assigns to me, but all the same I retains my own personal views on the matter. We don't need no extra hands to help run our establishment no more'n we needs water in our shoes, and my onspoken opinion is that Mr. Dallas thinks maybe the place 'll look more high-tonish by having an imported strange foreigner fussing round. Privately, I don't lose no time designating to this here Koga, which is the slick-headed boy's name, where he gets off so far as I is concerned. No sooner does he arrive in amongst our midst than I tolls him back into the far end of the butler's pantry and I says to him, I says:

"Yaller kid, lis'sen: I ain't 'sponsible fur yore comin' yere, but jest so shorely ez you starts messin' in my bus'ness I'm goin' be 'sponsible fur yore everlastin' departure. You 'tends to yore wu'k an' I 'tends to mine an' tharby we gits along harmonious. But one sign of meddlin' frum you an' I'll jest

reach back yere to my flank pocket whar I totes me a hosstile razor an' 'en you better pick out w'ich one of these yere winders you perfurs to jump out of."

He just sort of grins at that and sucks some loose air in betwixt his front teeth.

"Tha's right," I says, "save up yore breathin', 'cause ef I teks after you you'll shore require to have plenty of it on hand fur pu'pposes of fast travelin'. Chile," I says, "you's had yore warnin'—so harken an' give heed or else you'll find yo'se'f carved up so fine they'll have to fune'lize you on the 'stallment plan. Mr. Dallas he may be the big boss," I says, "but you lakwise better pay a heap of 'tention to the fust assistant deputy sub-boss w'ich I'm," I says, "him."

Saying thus I gives him a savigrous look backward over my shoulder and walks away stepping kind of light on my feet like a cat fixing for to pounce. He ain't saying a word; he's just standing there reserving some more breath.

Of course I ain't really aiming to start no race war. Always it has been my con-

stant aim to keep out of rough jams with one and all but, even so, I figures that it's just as well to get the jump on that there Japanee human-siphon and render him tame and docile from the beginning.

Next thing is that Mr. Dallas begins faulting the clothes he brought along with him from home. He says to me they appeared all right when he was having 'em made to order for him by M. Marcus & Son, corner of Third and Kentucky Avenue, which that is our leading merchant-tailor, but he can see now that they ain't got the real New York snap to 'em. And the ensuing word is that one of them swell Fifth Avenue shops is making him a full new outfit. Well, I must admit that suits me from the ground up; it's a sign to me I'm about to inherit.

And the next thing is that he invests in several cases of fancy drinkings which a bootlegging white man fetches it up to us under cover of the darkness. I sees Mr. Dallas counting out the money for to pay him, and it certainly amounts to an important sum. I ain't questioning the wisdom

of this step neither, seeking that the stock we fetched along with us from the South is vanishing very brisk, and the new supply ought to last me and him for no telling how long, if we both is careful.

The trouble with Mr. Dallas, though, is he ain't careful. Scarcely a day passes without some of his new-made Northern friends dropping in on him and sopping up highballs and cocktails and this and that. That there Mr. Bellows is one of our most earnest customers. He'll set down empty alongside a full bottle and stay right there till the emptiness and the fullness has done changed places. Also, when it comes to liberal consuming of somebody else's liquor, Mr. H. C. Raynor has his on-doubted merits. And when Mr. Dallas gives a party, which he does frequent and often, the wines and such just flows like manna from the rod of Jonah. Still, that ain't pestering me much. When white folks lives high in the front parlor niggers gets fat back in the kitchen.

Then on top of all this he buys himself an automobile and hires a white chauffeur

for to run her. She's one of these here low-cut, high-powerful cars which when you wants to go somewheres in a hurry you just steps on her and—*b-z-z-z*—you is done arrived! But she's plenty costive to run. Every time she takes a deep breath there's another half-gallon of gasoline gone. If the truth must be known, Mr. Dallas has not only bought one car; he's bought two. But we don't see the second one, which is a dark blue runabout, only when Miss Bill-Lee comes round, because it seems Mr. Dallas has loaned it out to her for her own use, him paying the garage bills. Betwixt themselves they speaks of it as a loan, but I thinks to myself that this probably is predestinated to be one of the most permanent loans in the history of the entire loaning business.

So it goes. Every day, pretty near it, delivery boys comes knocking at the service door bringing this and that for Mr. Dallas. If it ain't half a dozen fresh pairs of shoes it's a sack-full of these here golf utensils or some new silk pyjamas; and if it ain't another motoring coat or an elaborous

smoking jacket, it's a set of silver-topped brushes and combs and bottles and things for his toilet table, with his initials cut on 'em. It seems like he must stop in somewheres every morning on his way downtown to business and buy himself something. So I judges the money must be coming in mighty brisk at the bung-hole, because it certainly is pouring out mighty steady from the spigots.

It also must be a powerful handy and convenient business to be in, for not only does it appear to pay so well, but it practically almost runs itself. Often Mr. Dallas ain't starting down-town till the morning is 'most gone, and sometimes he gets back home as early as four o'clock in the evening. Come Saturday, he don't go near the headquarters at all. That astonishes me deeply, because down home on a Saturday the stores all stays open till late at night on account of the country people coming into town and the hands at the tobacco warehouses and the factories and all being paid off, and the niggers being out doing their trading. Especially the nig-

gers. You take the average one of 'em, and if he can't spend all he's got on Saturday night, it practically spoils his Sunday for him. He ain't aiming to waste none of his money, saving it. So, with us, Saturday is the busiest day in the week. But seemingly not so in this locality.

In fact, so far as I observes to date, the folks up here has got a special separate system of their own for doing pretty near everything. More times than one enduring this past month I has said to myself that there certainly is a big difference betwixt Paducah and New York City. You don't notice it so much in Paducah, but, lawsy, how it does prone into you when you gets to New York!

CHAPTER VII

Country Side

FOR instances, now, take this here Saturday last past. Down home Mr. Dallas would a-been down to that there oil-office of his bright and early shaking hands with the paying customers and helping boss the clerks whilst they drawed off the oil, and all. But nothing like that don't happen here with us—no sir, not none whatsomever. He lays in bed until it's going on pretty near ten o'clock and then he gets up and I packs him, and along about dinnertime, which they calls it lunch-time round this town, we puts out in the car to the country for a week-end. Only, for the amount of baggage we totes with us you'd a-thought it was going to be a month-end. I'm tooken along to look after his clothes and to do general valetting for him.

We takes Mr. Raynor and Mr. Bellows

and the permanent-wavy lady, Mrs. Gaylord, along with us. Miss DeWitt and Miss O'Brien is also headed for the same place we is, but they comes in the blue runabout traveling close behind us. By now, I has done learned not to expect Mrs. Gaylord to bring a husband with her. It seems like she can get 'em, but she can't keep 'em. She's been married three times in all; but from what I can hear, her first husband hauled off and died on her and the second one kind of strayed off and never come back. I ain't heard 'em say what happened to the present incumbent but since he ain't never been produced, I judge he must've got mislaid someway, so now she's practically all out of husbands again. Still, she seems to be bearing up very serene at all times. If she misses 'em she don't let on.

Well, we loads up the car with the white folks, and with valises and golf-sacks and one thing and another and starts for the country. But I must say for it that it's totally unsimilar to any country like what I has been used to heretofore. The front yards which we passes all looks like the

owners must take 'em in at nights and in the mornings brush 'em off good and put 'em back outdoors again; and most of the residences is a suitable size to make good high-school buildings or else feeble-mind institutes, and even the woodlots has a slicked-up appearance like as if they'd just come back that same day from the dry-cleaner's. In more'n an hour's steady travel I don't see a single rail fence nor a regulation weed-patch nor a lye kettle nor an ash-hopper nor a corn-crib nor a martin-box nor a hound-dog nor a smoke-house nor scarcely anything which would signify it to be sure-enough country. I thinks to myself that if a cotton-tail rabbit was aiming to camp out here he'd naturally be obliged to pack his bedding along with him.

When we arrives where we is headed for I is still further surprised because, beforehand, Mr. Dallas tells me we is going to stop at a country-place, but it looks to me more like a city-hall which has done strayed far off from its functions and took root in a big clump of trees alongside the river.

Why, it's got more rooms in it than our new county infirmary's got and grounds around it all beautiful like a cemetery. It belongs to a very spry-acting lady named Mrs. Banister, which she is a friend of Mrs. Gaylord's. There's a Mr. Banister, too, but as far as I can judge, the lady is the sole proprietor and his job is just being Mrs. Banister's Mr. and helping with the drinks when the butler is busy doing something else. I hears the cook saying out in the kitchen that he can also mix a very tasty salad-dressing. Well, that's what he looks like to me, just a natural-born salad-dressing mixer.

But we don't arrive there until it's getting towards four o'clock by reason of us stopping for quite a sojourn at a tea-house along the road. Leastwise, they calls it a tea-house, but its principalest functions, so far as I can note, is to provide accommodations for folks to dance and to drink up the refreshments which they've fetched along with 'em in pocket flasks; and you might call that tea if you prefers to, but it's the kind of tea which now sells by the case

for cash down and is delivered at your house after dark.

That's mainly what our outfit does there—dance and refresh themselves with what the gentlemen brought along on their hips. From where I'm setting in the car outside I can see 'em weaving in and out amongst the tables whilst a string-band plays jazzing tunes for 'em to dance by. But Mr. Dallas don't appear to be getting the hang of it so very well and the chauffeur, who's setting there with me, he allows probably the boss ain't caught on to these here new dances yet.

I says to him, I says:

"Huh! Does you call 'at a new dance?"

He says:

"Sure—the newest one of 'em all. That's the Reitzenburger Grapple—it's just hit town."

And I says:

"Then it shore must a-been a long time on the road, gittin' yere; 'cause niggers down my way," I says, "wuz dancin' 'at air dance fully ten yeahs ago—only they done so behind closed doors," I says, "bein'

'feared the police mout claim disawd'ly conduct an' stop 'em frum it."

He says:

"Did you ever dance it?"

I says to him:

"Who, me? Many's a time. But not lately," I says.

"What made you stop?" he says.

"I got religion," I says.

There was also considerable careless dancing done at the Banister place that night and early the following morning. In fact, there was considerable of a good many things done there that Saturday and Sunday—tennis and golf and horseback-riding and billiards and pool and going in swimming in a private lake on the premises and playing a card game which they calls it auction-bridge, and eating and drinking and smoking. Everybody is so busy all day changing clothes for the next event they ain't got very much time for the thing that's on at the time being. But when the night-time comes the ladies strips down to full-dress and all hands just settles in for the three favorite sports, which is dancing

and cards and drinks, both long and short. I has seen thirsty gentlemen before in my day but to the best of my recollection I ain't never encountered no ladies that seemed so parched-like as one or two of these here ladies was. I'm thinking in particular of Mrs. Gaylord. She certainly is suffering from a severe attack of the genuine parchments. But I'll say this much for her—she's doing her level best to get shut of it by taking the ordained treatment. That Saturday evening whilst I is upstairs in Mr. Dallas' room laying out his dress-clothes, the guests, about a dozen of 'em is out in the front yard setting round little tables where I can see 'em from the window, and every time I passes the window and looks out it seems like she's being served with a little bit more. She carries it just beautiful, though; she certainly has my deep personal admirations for her capacity. But next day when she comes down stairs she acts dauncy and low-spirited for awhile. She's got on a fresh complexion, to be sure, but even so she looks sort of weather-beaten 'round the eyes. You take 'em

when they is either prematurely old or else permanently young and the morning is always the most tellingest time on 'em. Well, several of those present ain't feeling the best in the world, seemingly, that Sunday when they strolls forth for late breakfast 'long about half past eleven. It was after three o'clock before they dispersed and some of 'em ain't entirely got over it yet—they is still kind of dispersed-looking, if you gets my meaning.

Well, all day Sunday is just like Saturday evening was, only if anything, more so; and late Sunday night the party busts up and scatters and we starts back to town. Mr. Dallas he elects for to ride back in the runabout with Miss Bill-Lee so that throws Miss O'Brien, the one which they calls Pat for short, into the big car with the rest of our crowd. Starting off she quarrels right peart with Mrs. Gaylord. I gathers that they was partners at the bridging game part of the time and they can't get reconciled with one another over the way each one of 'em handled her cards. The more they scandalizes about it the more onreconciled

they gets, too. It seems like each one thinks the other don't scarcely know how to deal, let alone play the hands after she gets 'em. Setting there listening to 'em carrying on I thinks to myself these here Northern white folks must hate to lose even a little bit of money. I knows these two ladies couldn't a-lost much neither—I heard Mr. Raynor saying beforehand they was going to play five cents a point. But to overhear 'em debating now, you'd a-thought it had been a real stiff game, like dollar-limit poker, say, or set-back at six bits a corner.

After awhile Miss Pat she quits argufying and drops off to sleep and Mr. Bellows he likewise drifts off into a doze and that leaves Mrs. Gaylord and Mr. Raynor talking together in the back seat kind of confidential. But the hood of the car being over 'em it seems like it throws their voices forward, and setting up with the chauffeur I can't keep from eavesdropping on part of what they is confabbing about.

Presently I hears Mr. Raynor saying:

"Well, you never can guess in advance what a sap will like, can you? You would

have thought he'd fall for a kiddo with a good, strong up-to-date tomboy line, like little Patsy here. But no—not at all! He takes one look into those languishing eyes of our other friend and goes down and out for the count. Funny—eh, what? Well, it only goes to show that while the vamp stuff is getting a trifle old-fashioned it still pays dividends—if only you pick the right customer."

Then I hears Mrs. Gaylord saying:

"Her system may be a bit *passé* but you can't say she doesn't work fast once she gets under way. Clever, I call it."

"Clever?" he says, "you bet! She works fast and she works clean, tidying up as she goes along and burying her own dead. I always did say for her that when it came to being a gold-digger she had the original Forty-niners looking like inmates of the Bide-a-Wee Home. Fast? I'll say so!"

"She has need to be fast, working opposition to you, Herby, dear," says Mrs. Gaylord. "Speaking of expert blood-suckers, I shouldn't exactly call you a vegetarian."

"Hush, honey," he says, "let's not talk

shop out of business hours. And anyhow," he says, "I don't mind a little healthy competition on the side. It stimulates trade under the main tent—if it's done in moderation."

"You should know, Herby," she says sort of laughing; "with your experience you should know if anybody does."

Then he laughs, too, a kind of a low and meaning chuckle, and they goes to talking about something else.

But I has done heard enough to set me to studying mighty earnest. Neither one of 'em ain't specifying who they means by "he" and "she" but I can guess. Once more I says to myself, I says:

"Uh huh, uh huh!

CHAPTER VIII

Dark Secrets

SOME of the folks which has been following our experiences, as I has wrote them down, might think it was my bounden duty to go straight-away to Mr. Dallas and promulgate to him these here remarks which I hears pass betwixt Mr. H. C. Raynor and the permanent-wavy lady on that Sunday night six weeks ago, coming back from our week-end in the country. But I does not by no means see my way clear to doing so. In the first place, I ain't never been what you might call a professional promulgator. In the second place, I figures the time ain't ripe to start in telling what I believes and what I suspicions. In the third place, I don't know yet if it ever will be ripe.

Some white folks, seems like, is just naturally beset with a craving to bust into

colored folkses' business and try for to run their personal affairs for 'em. Mr. Dallas, he is not gaited that way in no particular whatsoever; him having been born and raised South and naturally knowing better anyhow; but some I might mention is. Still, and even so, most white folks don't care deeply for anybody at all, much less it's somebody which is colored, to be telling 'em onpleasant and onwelcome tidings. And he is white and I is black—and there you is!

Another way I looks at it is this way: There's a whole heap of white folks, mainly Northerners, which thinks that because us black folks talks loud and laughs a-plenty in public that we ain't got no secret feelings of our own; they thinks we is ready and willing at all times to just blab all we knows into the first white ear that passes by. Which I reckon that is one of the most monstrous mistakes in natural history that ever was. You take a black boy which he working for a white family. Being on close relations that-a-way with 'em he's bound to know everything they does—what they is

thinking about, what-all they hopes and what-all they fears. But does they, for their part, know anything about how he acts amongst his own race? I'll say contrary! They maybe might think they knows but you take it from J. Poindexter they positively does not do nothing of the kind. All what they gleans about him—his real inside emotions, I means—is exactly what he's willing for 'em to glean; that and no more. And usually that ain't so much.

Yes sir, the run of colored folks is much more secretious than what the run of the white folks give 'em credit for. I reckon they has been made so. In times past they has met up with so many white folks which taken the view that everything black men and black women done in their lodges or their churches or amongst their own color was something to joke about and poke fun at. Now, you take me. I is perfectly willing to laugh with the white folks and I can laugh to order for 'em, if the occasion appears suitable, but I is not filled up with no deep yearnings to have 'em laughing at me

and my private doings. 'Specially if it's strange white folks.

Furthermore there's this about it: I've taken due notice that, whites and blacks alike, pretty near anybody will resent your coming to 'em on your own say-so and telling 'em right out of a clear sky that they is making a grievous big mistake in doing this or that. If they themselves takes the lead—if they seeks you out of their own accord and says to you, confidential-like, they is in a peck of trouble and craves to know how they is going to get out from under the load—why, that's different. Then you can step in, in friendship's name, and do your best to help 'em unravel the tangle which they has got themselves snarled up in it. If you asks me, I would say that advice gets a heap warmer welcome where you goes hunting for it than where it comes hunting for you. And, likewise, sympathy is something which you appreciates all the more if you went out shopping for it yourself. You don't want it to come knocking at the door like one of these here old peddlers taking orders for enlarging crayon portraits and

forcing its way right into your fireside circle whether or no, and camping there in your lap.

Moreover, speaking in particular of our own case, what right has I got to be intimating to Mr. Dallas my private beliefs about the private characters of this here brisk crowd which he has gone and got so thick with since we arrived here on the scene? Right from the first I has had my own personal convictions about the set he's in with. I has made up my mind that they ain't the genuine real quality; that they is just a slicked-up, highly-polished imitation of the real quality; that they ain't doing things so much as they is overdoing 'em. The way I looks at it, they bears the same relation to regulation high-toney folks which a tin minnow does to sure-enough live bait. You maybe might fool a fish with it but you couldn't fool the world at large for so very long. And as for me, I ain't been fooled at all, not at no time. But I naturally can't go stating my presenterments to Mr. Dallas without he the same as practically invites me first for to do so. Now, can I? But if

he finds it out for himself and approaches me, that's a roan horse of another color.

So the above reasons is why I is at present keeping my mouth shut in front of him about what concerns him solely. Besides, so many things continues to happen from day to day here in New York it keeps me right busy just staying up with the procession and not overlooking the stray 'bets. For instances, now, there's my moving-picture scheme which I thinks up out of my own head and which promises to turn out mighty profitable if everything goes well.

CHAPTER IX

Movie-Land

HAVING so much else to keep track of I has plumb forgot up till now to set forth how comes it we gets ourselves interested in the movies. You see, both Miss Pat and Miss Bill-Lee is in that line, although not working at it very steady. In fact, practically all our crowd lets on to be doing something or other for to earn a living when they can't think of nothing else to do. It seems like Mr. Bellows sets himself up to be one of these here interior decorators, which I don't know exactly what that is, though I has my notions for I has seen him decorating.

Let somebody else provide the materials and he's right there with the interior. Mrs. Gaylord she's an alimony-collector by profession and doing right well at her trade, too, from all I can gather. And Mr. Raynor

he calls himself a broker. I hears Mrs. Gaylord saying once, sort of joking, that being a broker is the present tense of being broke, which I reckon that is not only grammar but facts, except when somebody like Mr. Dallas comes along with ready cash on hand. But the two young ladies has both been in theatricals for going on several years now, first on the old-fashioned talking stage and more lately with the films; so naturally there's a right smart talk about films and screens and all, going on from time to time.

It seems like all hands amongst 'em agrees there's a heap of money in the film business if only the right folks was to take hold of it and get it away from the parties which is now trying to run it. It also seems that if only Miss Bill-Lee could get the proper sort of a chance, which she can't on account of jealousy and one thing and another, she'd be a brightly shining star in no time. All she needs is for somebody to put her out in a piece which'll suit her and then she'll be a sensational success and all concerned will make more money than they'll know what to do with. I hears her saying

so more than once to Mr. Dallas, all the time looking at him with them yearning big black eyes of hers. It seems like that is the one thing which she requires for to make her perfectly happy. And seeing as how that appears to be Mr. Dallas' chief aim in life these times—making Miss Bill-Lee more happy—I says to myself that first thing we know we'll be investing in a new line on the side. Mr. Raynor, though, he ain't so favorable to the notion. I can tell that he don't want Mr. Dallas to be spreading his play 'round so promiscuous. It ain't so much what he says; it's by the way he looks when the subject comes up that I can figure out what his private emotions is.

Anyhow, the upshot is that Mr. Dallas takes to spending considerable of his spare time at a studio up-town where the two young ladies works, getting pointers and so on. One evening—I should say, one afternoon—he telephones down to the apartment for me to bring one of his heavy overcoats up there to him because, what with late fall-time being here now, the weather has turned off sort of cold; and that's how be-

falls that I gets my look at the insides of one of these here studio places, which I must say, alongside of the one I seen, a crazy-house is plumb rational and abounding in restfulness.

From the outsides it looks to be like something suitable for a tobacco stemmery or maybe a skating-rink, but once I gets past the watchman on the outer door—*Who-ee!* That's all—*Who-ee!* I stops close by the door and for a spell I watches what's going on and I thinks to myself that whilst there may be a-plenty of money in the moving-picture business, and doubtless is, the bulk of it is liable to stay in it permanent. Never before in my whole life has I seen so many folks letting on like they was fixing for to transact something important and then not doing it. If they was all on piecework they couldn't earn enough to pay for half-soling the shoes which they wears out running about getting in one another's way. But as I understands it, they mainly is hired by the day and not by the job, and my heart certainly goes out in sympathetical feelings for the man, whoever he may be, that's foot-

ing the bills at the end of the week. If I was him I'd charge general admittance for the public to come in and witness these here carryings-on, and thereby get some part of my wastage back.

Almost the first thing which distracts my attention is a pestered-looking man with a pair of these here high leather leggings on, like he was fixing to go horse-back riding but in his frenzy has mislaid the horse; which he is full of authority and dashing to and fro with a big megaphome in one hand and in the other a bunch of wadded-up paper with writing on it. He appears to be in sole charge; and if hollowing loud was worth fifty cents a hollow he'd be a millionaire inside of a month if his voice didn't give out on him. I finds out a little later that he's what they calls the director. Well, he certainly does directicate.

One minute he's yelling at a couple of the hands up in the loft overhead, which their job is to handle some of the lights and then he's yelling at the little fellow which is running the picture-taking machinery, and then he's yelling at a bunch of men which has

charge of the scenery, only this crowd don't pay no attention to him but just goes on doing their work very languid-like; so I judges they must belong to a union and therefore can afford to be independent. But most in general he devotes his yelling to a whole multitude of folks all dressed up in acting clothes with their faces painted the curiousest ever I seen. And, at that, I seen a sight of face-painting since I come to New York! Under them funny lights their skins is an awful corpsy greenish-yellowish-whitish and their lips is purple, like as if they has been drownded nine days and has just now come to the top.

He herds all these people together and gets 'em set to act a piece. And then something goes wrong. Either he ain't satisfied with the lights or with their actions or else he remembers something important which has been forgotten and he yells for somebody to fetch it, and six or eight runs to get it and brings the wrong thing back, and he raves and cusses under his breath and tells everybody to go back to their marks and start in all over again.

And the next try is just the same as the first. And the third try is not no more successful than the other two was. So then the director he shooes the whole crowd back out of the way and walks up and down and waves his arms and wildly states that he hopes he may be hanged if he's going to go on until they learns how to rehearse. And I remarks to myself that if I was them white folks I certainly would give him his wish and hang him!

So then everybody loafs round a spell, whilst the director confabs with a little thin nervoused-looking man called Mr. Simons, with glasses on. And then the director announces that they won't try to shoot the mob scene today and all the extras can go till nine o'clock tomorrow morning, and in the meantime he trusts and prays that they may get a little sense or something in their heads. So, accordingly, most of the multitude departs leaving only about a dozen or more actor ladies and gentlemen setting round on odds and ends and seemingly very grateful for the peaceful lull.

By this time I has done localized Mr.

Pulliam where he's standing over in a corner talking with Miss Bill-Lee and a couple more ladies, and I makes my way to him. Doing so, I has to pass behind some of the scenery. On the other side it's just like a row of houses with roofs and porches and all, but here on the behind-side of it there ain't nothing only plastering laths and raggedy ends of burlaps and chicken-coop wire and naked joists. It puts me right sharply in mind of some of these folks we has been associating with up here—everything in stock devoted to making a show for the front and nothing except the rubbish left over for the backing. Well, I reckons it's always like that when you is making-believe to be something you truly ain't, whether it's in a moving-picture studio or out in the great world at large.

After I gives Mr. Dallas his coat he tells me to hang round if I wishes to do so and watch 'em working. So I hangs round. But there ain't much working done for quite a spell but, instead, a lot of general speechifying and explaining betwixt this one and that one. Finally though, the pest-

ered man he yells out something about being ready to shoot an interior. All hands rambles over to another part of the building where there is more scenery which is fixed up to look like the insides of a short-order restaurant. One of the young ladies and one of the young gentlemen sets down at a table in front of the camera and lets on to be eating a quick snack whilst a white man, which is dressed up like a waiter and blacked up to look like he's colored, waits on 'em. The two at the table appears to be giving satisfaction but the ruler of the roost ain't pleased with the way the waiter acts out his part.

I ain't blaming him for not being pleased, neither. To start with, the waiter is blacked up too much. He don't look like he's genuine colored; he looks more like he's been shining up a cook stove and got most of the polish rubbed off onto his face and hands. He don't act like he's genuine colored, neither. I judges he must have studied the business of acting like colored folks from watching nigger minstrel shows. He keeps rolling his eyes up in his head and smack-

ing his lips, the same as an end-man does, which is all right, I reckon, when you is an end-man but which does not fill the bill when you is letting on to be a sure-enough black person; because for years past I ain't never seen scarsely no minstrel man which really deported himself as though he had colored feelings inside of him.

Still, I must say for him that he's doing his level best to oblige. But what with him trying to remember to keep the eyes rolling and the lips smacking, and the director yelling at him through that megaphome to do the next step this-a-way or that-a-way, he's presently so muddled up in his mind that it seems like he can't get nothing at all accomplished. It makes me feel actually sorry for him; but I ain't sorry for the director. One of 'em is ignorant and willing to admit it; the other one is ignorant but is trying to cover it up by behaving bossified and making loud sounds and laying the blame on somebody else. Leastwise, that's how I figures it out. I says to myself, I says:

"It's all wrong frum who laid the rail. Yas suh, I'll tell the waitin' world they

don't neither one of 'em onderstan' the leas' particle 'bout nigger actions an' nigger depotemint."

I must 've said it out loud without thinking, because right alongside me somebody speaks up and says:

"What do you know about this business?"

I turns my head and looks, and it's that there quiet little man with the big glasses on, name of Mr. Simons.

I says to him, I says:

"I don't know nothin' 'bout this yere bus'ness, but I does know somethin' 'bout bein' cullid, seein' ez I is one myse'f."

He sort of squints up his eyes like he's got an idea. He says:

"Could you take the director's place there and show that man how to get through with his scene?"

"Who, boss, me?" I says. "No suh! I mebbe mout could tek his place pervidin' w'ite folkses didn't mind havin' me th'owin' awders at 'em, but even so, I couldn't never plant the right idees in 'at other gen'elman's mind."

"Why not?" he says.

" 'Cause it's plain to me," I says, " 'at in the fust place he ain't got no notion ez to how a black boy would carry hisse'f whilst waitin' on a table. 'Scuse me fur sayin' so ef he's a friend of yours, but tha's the facts of the case, boss—the feelin's ain't thar."

"All right," he says, "then could you play the waiter's part yourself?"

"Well suh," I says, "mebbe I could ef they wouldn't 'spect me to act lak a actor but just 'lowed me to act lak a human bein'. I ain't never done no actin'," I says, "but I been a human bein' fur ez fur back ez I kin remember."

"You've got it!" he says. "What this business needs in it is fewer people trying to act and more people willing to behave like human beings. How would you like to put on the jacket and the apron that man is wearing and see if you could get away with the job he's trying to do?"

"Ef 'twould be a favor to you—yas, suh," I says. "But I'm skeered the directin' gen'elman mout object."

"I think possibly I could fix that," he

says. "I happen to be the owner of this plant. I'll go speak to him."

"Hole on," I says, "ef you please, suh. The onliest way I could do it," I says, "would be fur you to tell me jest whut you wanted done an' 'en you'd have to mek all hands stand back an' keep quiet whilst I wuz tryin' to do it. It sho'," I says, "would git me all razzle-dazzled to have some gen'elman yellin' at me th'ough 'at megaphome ever' half secont or so."

"There's another idea that's worth experimenting with," he says. "I've thought the same thing myself before now. You stay right here a minute."

Well, to make a long story no longer, he goes over and whispers something to the director and first-off the director he shakes his head like he's dead set against the proposition but Mr. Simons keeps on arguing with him and after a little bit the director flings up both hands sort of despairful and goes over and sets down at a little table, looking very sulky. Then, Mr. Simons he tells the blacked-up man to take off his apron and his jacket and tells me to put

'em on me and then he tells me very slow just what he wants me to do, but he says I'm to do it my own way and if, as I goes along, I thinks of anything else which a real colored waiter would do under such-like circumstances, why, I'm to stick that in, too.

"Try to forget that it's all pretending," he says, "and try to forget that there's a camera grinding in front of you. Just remember that you're a waiter in a cheap dump serving a couple of young people that have run away from home to be married and are in a hurry to get something to eat. Try to register your expectations of getting a nice big tip from the young fellow. And when you slip the girl the note that 'll tip her off to the fact that her old sweetheart is waiting outside and wants to see her, you want to make sure that the man at the table with her can't see you, but that people sitting out in the audience watching the show will see the note pass. Get me? We won't have any rehearsals—too much preliminary stuff might make you self-conscious. I'll have 'em start shooting

just as soon as you come on. Now go to it!"

Which I does it all according to orders. I must've gave utter satisfaction, too, because when we gets through, everybody setting round claps their hands and applauses me same as if they was at a regular show—that is, everybody does so except the director; which he continues to act peevish. This here Mr. Simons he goes yet farther than applausing; he comes over to me and he says I has put him under obligations to me by helping him out and if ever I feels like doing some more moving-picture work just to call on him either down at his office or up here at the studios, because he says there ain't no telling when he may have another show with a part in it for a smart spry colored person. And with that he slips his card into my hand and along with it a ten dollar bill, which that is more money than ever I has earned before in my whole life for a light job, let alone just acting natural for about five or six minutes.

He starts on away then but suddenly he turns round like a notion had just hit him

between the eyes and he comes back to me and says he wants to speak to me a minute and I follows him back around a corner where nobody won't be liable to hear us.

"I want to ask you about something," he says, when we arrives there. "You seem to be a person who keeps his eyes and his ears open; besides, you're colored yourself and what I need here, I think, is somebody who can look at a proposition from a colored man's slant rather than from a white man's. And finally, my guess is that you haven't been away from your own part of the country very long and that probably means you haven't lost your perspective. Do you get my drift?"

I wouldn't know a perspective if I met up with one in the big road but I ain't aiming to expose my ignorance before this strange gentleman. I tries to look like I'm mighty glad that I've been so careful as not to lose it and I tells him yes, sir, I gets his drift.

"Good," he says. "Well, making it snappy, the idea is just this: New York City is full of colored actors—not merely

singers and dancers but real artists, some of 'em, who can act and are especially strong in comedy. That's point number one. In nearly every good-sized town in this country, North and South, there's at least one moving-picture house catering to your people. That's point number two. But day after day and night after night those patrons see nothing but pictures written by white people, directed by white men, and acted by white people. That's point number three. Now, I've been carrying round a scheme in my head for quite awhile—a scheme to try the experiment of turning out a line of two-reelers, say, done by colored casts, and selling them, if I can, to these three or four thousand houses run by colored people and playing to colored people. I've got the studio right here—I've got the organization and the equipment. And at any time I need it I can put my hand on plenty of acting material—colored people, I mean—who'll only need a little training to make 'em fit for my purposes. Some of 'em have already had some training—as extras around the local plants.

As I dope it out, if I can produce pictures which will appeal particularly to your people I'll have a steady market through the big exchanges; because, if I know anything about the tastes of the general public, white people will enjoy all-colored comedies—if they're done right—almost as much as colored people will. And that's point number four. Now then, give me your idea of the value of the notion?"

"Mister," I says, "I kin only tell you how one cullid pusson feels, w'ich 'at one is me: The way I looks at it, you ain't needin' to bother much 'bout fancy scenery an' special fixin's—wid a crowd of niggers the mainest p'int will be the actin'. The actin' part is whar you can't fool 'em. An'," I says, "ef you kin git holt of a crowd of cullid actors w'ich is willin' to ack lak the sho'-nuff oletime cullid an' not lak onbleached imitations of w'ite folks, it seems lak to me the rest of it oughter be plum' easy. Mostly I'd mek the pitchers comical, ef I wuz you. You kin do 'at an' still not hurt nobody's feelin's, w'ite nur black. Ef you wants to perduce a piece showin' a lot of niggers

gittin' skinned, let it be another nigger w'ich skins 'em. Then," I says, "w'en, at the last, they gits even wid him it'll still be nigger ag'inst nigger. An' ef, once't in awhile, you meks a kind of a serious-lak pitcher, showin', mebbe, how the race is a-strivin' to git ahaid in the world, 'at ought to fetch these yere new-issue cullid folks w'ich," I says, "is seemin'ly become so plentiful up Nawth. But mainly I'd stick to the laffin' line ef I wuz you—niggers is one kind of folks in 'is country w'ich they ain't afeard to laff. An' whutever else you does," I says, "don't mess wid no race problem. We gits mouty tired, sometimes, of bein' treated the way we of'en is. Tek my own case," I says. "I ain't no problem, I's a pusson. I craves to be so reguarded. An' tha's the way I alluz is been reguarded by my own kind of w'ite folks down whar I comes frum," I says.

"Say," he says, when I gets through saying this, "I think you've earned another ten-spot." And with that he shoves one more of them desirable bills at me; which he don't have no real struggle inducing me to take

it. Because I'm a powerful easy person to control in such matters. And always has been, from a child up.

"I was practically convinced all along that the proposition was worth trying," he says. "What you say helps to confirm a judgment I already had. Well, don't forget about coming to see me if you want work in my line—there may be plenty of it if this thing pans out." And he shakes hands with me again and walks off.

Right after that a young white gentleman he comes looking for me to take down my full entitlements and he says I will be honorably mentioned by name on the program of the picture which they now is making, when it's done. And Mr. Dallas he tells me I can take the rest of the day off for to celebrate having broke into the movies.

CHAPTER X

Black Belt

BUT I figures I has got something better to do than just to be gallivanting to and fro on a frolic. A notion has busted out insides of my brains. So right off I puts off across town for West One-Hundred and Thirty-fifth Street hoping for to find one U. S. G. Petty, Colored.

Some time back, as I remembers, I made brief mention about having affiliated myself into the Pastime Colored Pleasure and Recreation Club, Inc. Only, the last word —*Inc.*—is not usually spoke when you is naming the club, by reason of its sounding so much like a personal reflection upon the prevailing complexion of some of the members. Still, that is the way it is wrote out on the letter-heads and the initiation blanks.

I has belonged for going on more than a month now and I spends much of my spare

time in the club-rooms. I feels more comfortable among my fellow-affiliators than I does any place else in this town. Looking back on it I'm convinced 'twas up there I first began to get shut of the grievous homestick pangs which afflicted me so sorefully following after our advent into these parts. Up to now I has not spoke of my being homesick because it seemed like to me the mainest job was to set down what come to pass without paying much heed to private sensations upon the part of the scribe thereof, but, if the truth must now be confessed, I oftentimes was mighty nigh completely overcome by my sufferings from the same during them opening weeks of the present sojourn.

At the beginning I used to get so tired, night-times, tramping about streets which was full of utter strangers and not never speaking a word to nobody nor seeing a friendly face, that I liked to died, dadblame if I didn't! If I stood still they'd run right on over me and if I walked on I didn't have nowheres to go and I'd be so exhaustified from looking at sights all by myself

that I'd get to wishing I'd never see another sight again as long as I lived, without I had somebody I knowed along with me to help me look at it. And then I'd come morosing on back to the apartment and probably Mr. Dallas he'd be out and nobody there but that there slick-headed Japanee boy. I tried sociable talk with him once or twice but you really don't derive no great amount of nourishment from talking with somebody which thinks language is sucking your breath in through your front teeth and once in awhile grinning like one of these here pumpkin Jack-mer-lanterns. So I soon learned the lesson of just letting him be.

I'd go on back to my room and take off my shoes for to ease my aching feet; but whilst taking off your shoes is good for your feet it don't help the ache in your soul none. I'd set at the window and look out on them millions and millions of lights, all winking and blinking at me like hostile bright eyes, and away down below me in the street I could hear old automobile horns blatting like lost ghosts, and every now and then

there'd rise up to my ears a sort of a rumble and a roar, like as if New York City was having indigestion pains; and I'll say it positively was lonesome. I could shut my eyes and see my own home-town with the shade trees leaning down towards the sidewalks like they was interested in what went on underneath them, and I could hear the voices of the neighbors, both white and black, calling back and forth to one another and I could seem to smell frying cat-fish spitting in the skillet at old Uncle Isom Woolfolk's hot snack-stand down back of the Market House, and I also could smell that damp, soothing kind of a smell which it rolls in off the river on a warm night and then—oh, my Blessed Maker!—something would hurt me like having the misery in your side.

That's the way it was very frequent at the outsetting. But pretty soon I gets acquainted with a couple of colored boys which works in the apartment house next door to ours—not West Indians but regulation colored boys, one being from Macon, Georgia, and one from Memphis, Tennes-

see—and they takes to escorting me round with 'em at night, mainly in what the white folks calls the Harlem Black Belt. Fussing back and forth, thuslike, I makes yet more acquaintances and then—*bam!*—all at once there's a quick change in me and I ain't so choked up with lonesomeness like I was. All of a sudden my having lived heretofore always down in Kentucky has become to me just a kind of a far-off dream and it's almost like as if I had been a New York residenter for years past. 'Specially does I feel so when I goes up to the Pastime Club; which I joins it by invitation about a month ago and is now already being talked of for one of the honory offices at the next annual election which will come along in about five or six weeks from now.

I finds that the most of my race up here aims to copy their actions after white folks when they is showing themselves off in public. They is forever trying to talk like whites and trying to appear deeply oninterested in passing things, the same as some white folks does, and even trying to think like whites, I expect. But when they gets

off amongst themselves their natural feelings comes out on 'em and the true coloredism breaks forth and they cuts loose and enjoys themselves regardless. That's the way it is behind the closed doors of our clubrooms. Also, there's suitable games and indoor sports such as coon-can and two-bit-limit poker with the joker running wild and a round of rumdoodlums after every facefull; and when hunger gnaws at you there's a Chinee restaurant right handy by, which it caters 'specially to the colored trade. Here is where I first meets a crock of this here chop suey face to face; which it may be a Chinee dish but certainly is got a kind of an African flavor to it. If you can't get a mess of cow-peas and some real cornpones and maybe half a fried young spring chicken with an abundance of gravy, I don't know of nothing which makes a more desirable light snack between meals than about fifty cents worth of chop suey with a double order of boiled rice on the side and some of that there greasy black Chinee sauce to sop it in.

It's one time in the front room of the club

that I first takes special notice of this here U. S. G. Petty, which he is the same person I goes a-seeking upon leaving the studios on this day in question. The way he comes to bring himself to my attention is this way: One night five or six of us Pastimers in good standing is setting round not doing nothing in particular, but just setting, when talk arises concerning of Gabriel, the Black Prophet of Abyssinia, which his name is now on everybody's tongue, more or less.

It seems that the Black Prophet come a-projecting himself onto the local scene last spring, him claiming to hail from a far-off latitude called Abyssinia, and immediately he creates a big to-do, which is only to be expected considering of his general aspect. In the first place, he's a powerful orator and just overflowing with noble large words. In the second place, he's a great big overbearing-looking man and wearing at all times a flowing garment of purple like the night-shirt of a king, and instead of having a hat on he's got his head all bandaged up in many silken folds like he's got scalp-trouble. Naturally, folks turns out to look

at him; but language and curious clothes is not the sole things by which he recommends himself. He's got something even more compelling to the colored mind than what these two is—he's had a glorious vision, so he states, and he craves for to tell about it on all occasions where folks 'll give heed; which they freely does, because he certainly can explain the whyfores and 'numerate the whereases and show the whereins. But showing wherein is his main hold.

From the way he tells it, he laid down one night in his native country for to sleep and whilst he slept an angel appeared before him in a dream bearing a flaming scroll and a golden sword, and the angel anointed his brows with the oils of understanding and wiped the scales of blindness from off his eyes and smeared his lips with the salves of eloquence—altogether, it seem like the angel must a-been working on him half the night getting him greased-up to suit. And along towards morning the command is laid on him to go forth into the world and deliver his race from bondage in every

hemisphere there is. So it transpires that he takes his foot in his hand and he comes on across the seas over to these here United States of North America and starts in his ministrations in New York. Leastwise, that is the account as he lays it down; which he calls it an inspired prophecy from On High but it sounds more to me like an inspired real-estate scheme, because the plan as he preaches it is that all us black folks everywhere must straight-away rise ourselves up and follow after him, which he will then lead us back to our original own country of Affika where he will cause all the white folks which has settled there to pull out and leave us in sole charge for to rule the state and run our own government and be a free and independent people from thenceforth on forever. So you pays down so much for to join and so much every month in dues and soon then—to hear him tell it—you will be happy on your way across the ocean to find your haven in the Promised Land.

But not me! I ain't lost no haven. Moreover, if ever anybody does promise me

one-such I ain't aiming to go seeking after it under the guidnance of a dark stranger which he ain't no credentials for to endorse him in my eyes, excusing it's a purple silk night-shirt and a tale about him having been lubricated all over with a lot of different kinds of fancy ointments by an Abyssinian angel. No sir, if I has to do traveling in extreme foreign-off parts I'll go along with some of my own white folks which I can put trust in their words and dependence on their acts. And, finally, the idea of my returning to Affika does not seem to appeal to me in no way nor at no time whatsomever. What's the use of returning to a place where you ain't never been? As I says to myself the first time the notion is expounded to me, I says:

"I ain't frum Affika, I is frum Paducah, Kintucky. Some of my former folks may a-hailed frum there—leas'wise, tha's the common rumor—but the Poindexter fambly is been away so long it seems lak I ain't inherited the taste to go traipsin' back. Mo'over, ef whut I heahs 'bout it is correc', Affika is full of alligators an' lions an' onrec-

onciled Bengal tigers an' man-eatin' cannibals, w'ich I wouldn't be surprised but whut they all of 'em 'specially favors the dark meat. An' yere I is, a pernounced brunette! So, w'en they starts makin' up the excursion list they kin kin'ly leave my name off, 'cause I 'spects to be very busily engaged stayin' right whar I dog-goned is!"

CHAPTER XI

Afric Shores

THUS is what I says to myself, very first crack out of the box and I subsequent sees no reason for to change my views. But this night at the Pastime when the subject is brung forward for discussion, I just lurks in a corner, not saying nothing myself but doing some very vigorous listening. Being a new member, the way I is, I prefers not to declare myself in at the go-off but just to sort of hang back and catch the general drift of the old heads before I commits myself.

Regardless of your private convictions it don't hurt you none, sometimes, to throw in with the majority. Traveling with the current instead of against it, you maybe is not so prominent but you gets fewer bumps across your head. A minnow sliding downstream with a passel of other minnows

stands a heap better chance of leading a pleasant life than if he strives for to conspicious himself by swimming upstream all by himself. Old Brother Channel Cat is liable to come sauntering down past the towhead and see him going along there all alone, and open wide that there big mouth of his and then, little Mr. Minnow, I asks you, where is you?

So I sets and hearkens to the pow-wowing. It seems that two or three present has been swept right off their feet by the masterful preachments of this here Gabriel the Black Prophet. They is all organized up for to accept him as the chosen apostle of the colored race. It looks like they can't hardly wait for the blessed day to come when they'll pull out with him. They 'lows a lot of these here overbearing white folks is going to feel mighty funny the morning they wakes up and finds that all the black folks is done up and gone from 'em and there ain't nobody left for to pack their heavy burdens for 'em and wait on 'em, without they turns in and does it themselves. They says a lot more like that.

And pretty soon the old camp-meeting tone comes creeping into their voices and their eyes starts shining like they was repentant sinners gathered at the mourners' bench and they begins to sort of sing their words and generally work themselves up into a state of grace.

Right about then this here U. S. G. Petty, which they calls him 'Lisses for short, speaks up. Until now he has been reared back in his chair listening, the same as I is. But now he opens up and his words hits them onthusiastic ones like a dipperful of ice-water throwed in their faces.

He says to 'em, he says:

"W'en does all you niggers 'at's so homesick fur the sight of the dear Affikin shore aims to start on yore jubilatin' way? I is heared a lot tonight an' other times, too, 'bout this yere journey. I is heared it called a crusade an' a pilgrimage an' a whole passel of other fancy names. But so fur, nobody ain't confided to me the details of the departure."

"The fust batch goes ez soon ez the fust boat is ready," says one of the true believ-

ers, name of Oscar Jordan. "An' the rest will follow wid rejoicin' on the other boats of the fleet, ez they is made ready."

"Well, me, I ain't seen hair nur hide of one boat yit," says 'Lisses, "let alone it's a whole fleet."

"But ain't you seen the pitcher of her in the litrychure w'ich the Black Prophet give out?" says Oscar.

"I has, Brother," says 'Lisses; "I suttinly has. I also has seen pitchers of the late Kaiser Ex-Wilhellum of Germany, but that ain't no sign I 'spects to meet him strollin' up Lenox Avenue some pleasant mawnin' this comin' week."

"Yas, but the bindin' paymints is done been made on the fust ship," says Oscar. "The Grand Treasurer, w'ich he is the Black Prophet's brother-in-law by marriage, he announce' the full perticulars at the las' monster mass meetin'. He specify she is to have a cullid brass-band on bode an' a cullid string-band an' a cullid crew an' a cullid cap'n an'——"

"Uh huh!" says 'Lisses, "A cullid cap'n, huh? All right, boy, you kin give yore con-

fidences to a cullid cap'n ef you's a-mind to. But, speakin' ez yore friend an' well-wisher I should advise you at the same time w'en you is pickin' out your fav'rit' cullid cap'n 'at you lakwise also picks out yore fav'rit' flower fur display at the memorial services in case of a storm comin' up on the way acrost the high seas. 'Cause," he says, "it stands to reason the higher them seas is the deeper they is; an' ef you gits yo'se'f drownded out yonder it'll be a tho'ough job. Mind you," he says, "I ain't sayin' nothin' agin my own race so long ez they remains whar they natchelly belongs, w'ich is on the solid ground. But ef I'm goin' journey acros't the broad Newlantic Ocean I craves me a w'ite cap'n—yas, an' a w'ite crew, too."

One or two, including this here Oscar, tries to break in on him but he keeps right on. He says to 'em, he says:

"I wonder is you Ole Home-Weekers been figgerin' out how you is goin' git control of yore beloved native Affika w'en you arrives safely tharin? Seems lak to me tha's a p'int w'ich you better be payin' a right

smart attention to it befo'hand. 'Cause, frum whut I kin gather, w'ite folks is done already laid claim to the most part of Affika w'ich is fit fur a Christian to live in. I bet you wharever they is a diamond-mine or a gold diggin's or an ivory-mine or anythin' wuth havin', you'll find a bunch of w'ite men roostin' close't by, wid 'Posted' signs up on every hand. Whut does you aim to do 'en?"

"They ain't got no right fur to be thar in the fust place," says Oscar. "The Prophet done oratate fully 'bout that. Didn't Affika belong to us black folkses to begin wid? Has we ever deeded it away? No, that we ain't! Then it's still our'n, ain't it? So, therefo', we goes back in force an' th'ough our chosen leaders we demands 'at these yere trespassers re-hands it back over to its rightful owners, w'ich," he says, "tha's us."

"Even so," says 'Lisses, "even so. You lands an' you demands—an' 'en whut? This yere country belonged once't upon a time to the Injuns. An' w'ite folks come along an' chiseled 'em out of it, didn't they? They shore did so! But I ain't heared 'bout

no gin'el movemint in favor of turnin' it back over ag'in to the Injuns. The Injuns mout feel that-a-way but I ain't 'spectin' to see many w'ite folkses votin' in favor of it.

"Lis'sen: Once't you let w'ite folks git they feets rooted in the ground an' they stays fast, reguardless of whut the former perprietors may think 'bout it. W'ite folks in gin'el is very funny that way an' more 'specially ef they is Angler-Saxons. I don't know, myse'f, whar this yere Angler-Saxony is. I done look fur it on the map an' 'tain't thar. I reckin so many Angler-Saxons must a-moved off to other parts of the world seekin' whut they could confisticate unto theyselves 'at the 'riginal country they hailed frum has done vanish'. Jedgin' by they names, some of 'em must a-been Scotch an' some of 'em must a-been Irish and plenty more of 'em must a-been English; but no matter whut they names is, they is all alak in one respec': an' tha's clingin' fast to all the onimproved real-estate w'ich they gits they hands on. I knows, 'cause I wuz born and brung up 'mongst 'em down in No'th Ca'lina. An' they is still a right smart

sprinklin' of 'em lef' 'round these yere No'the'n parts, too. You jest try to mek 'em give up somethin' w'ich they desires fur to keep on keepin' it, an' you'll find 'em a powerful onhealthy crowd to prank wid. They's a heap of talk," he says, " 'bout the other races, w'ich is pourin' in yere, crowdin' 'em plum out of Noo Yawk City in time, notwithstandin' of 'em havin' been amongst the fust settlers yere. But lemme tell you somethin': Ef they wuzn' but two of them Angler-Saxons lef' in this whole town I bet you one of 'em would be the mayor an' the other 'd be the chief of police. Next to holdin' on to the land, runnin' the gov'mint is the most fav'rit' sport they follows after.

"An'," he says, "ef 'at is true of this yere country, you tek it frum me it's true of Affika. Me, I looks fur a lot of cullid fun'els to tek place befo' you has yore wish 'bout regainin' yore former homestids over thar," he says. Then his tone sort of changes. "But," he says, "I has jest been statin' the argumints on the No side. I wants to be fair, so I will lakwise 'low there's somethin' to be said on yore side, too. In fact," he

says, "ef only the suitable 'rangemints kin be made befo'hand, I aims to onlist myse'f in wid the movemint an' give to it," he says, "my most hearties' suppo't."

That seems to sort of take 'em by surprise. This here Oscar Jordan, being the most gabby one, is the first to get over his surprisement.

"How come you kin feel that way, 'Lisses," he says, "w'en fur the pas' ten minutes you been preachifyin' agin the whole notion? How come you willin' fur to remove yo'se'f off to the perposed All-Affikin Republic ef you holds them views w'ich you jest expound?"

"Who, me?" says 'Lisses. "You got me wrong! I ain't aimin' to remove myse'f nowhars. I is mos' comfor'ble whar I is at. No suh, whut I aims to do is to 'tach myse'f to the collector's office yere at home an' handle the money-dues ez they comes a-rollin' in frum the rest of you niggers. That's goin' be me an' my job—collectin' an' also disbursin'—'specially the las'-named."

I rises from where I is setting and I crosses to him and I extends to him the

right hand of fellowship and I says to him, I says:

"You," I says, "an' me both! I nominates myse'f to he'p you wid them duties. Brother Petty," I says, "you speaks words of wisdom w'ich they sounds lak my own. Le's us two promenade fo'th into the fresh air of the evenin'," I says, "an' exchange mo' views on the subjec's of the day. I feels," I says, " 'at we is goin' be agreeable companions one to the other an' vice or versa."

So from that hour we becomes good friends and sees quite much of one another. And the more I sees of him the better the cut of his jib seems to suit me. He follows after cornet-playing for a living. He plays in the orchestra at the Colored Crescent Vaudeville Theatre on the corner below where the Pastime Club is, so, what with him being in the profession and us friends and all, I thinks of him the next minute after this big idea comes to me up at the studio and that's why I goes seeking for him in West One-Hundred and Thirty-fifth Street; which without much trouble I finds

him. I takes him aside and I starts telling him what I has in my mind. Before I has been speechifying to him more than a minute I can tell he's getting interested and he begs me for to continue. And when I gets through he's just acclamatious over the notion of going in partners with me on the proposition. So we spends the rest of the day and until far into the night discussing the thing from every angle.

CHAPTER XII

Business Deals

BRIGHT and early next morning, along about half past ten o'clock, which is bright and early for New York, I is at Mr. Simons' offices down on Broadway. I sends my name in to him by a white boy which is on guard in an outside room amongst a lot of gold railings. In lessen no time at all the word comes back that I is to walk right in. I walks in and I finds Mr. Simons setting behind the largest desk that ever I seen, in a room mighty near big enough for a church. He acts like he's glad to see me again and he invites me for to have a seat and tell him what's on my mind because, he says, he found my conversation the day previous to be most edifying and helpful.

So I says to him, I says:

"Boss, I wants to ast you a question an'

'pun yore answer depends whither or no I'm goin' ast you a favor lakwise?"

"Shoot," he says.

I says:

"The question comes fust, w'ich it is ez follows: Ef you is earnest 'bout goin' into the mekin' of cullid pitchers fur cullid audiences, lak you told me yistiddy, I desires please, suh, to know w'en you aims to give out yore plans to the public at large th'ough the newspapers?"

He says:

"Pretty soon, I guess—just as soon as I get the scheme sort of shaped up. Why—did you want a job when we open up?"

"Naw suh, not 'at so much," I says. "I got a stiddy job now, valettin' fur Mr. Dallas Pulliam. But I has a right smart extra time on my hands an' I is been kind of figgerin' on mebbe doin' a little somethin' on the side in my sparin' hours. An' so, whut I 'specially craves to know frum you is whether, w'en you gits ready, you intends fur to 'nounce yore plans in the cullid papers yere in this town?"

"Well," he says, "I hadn't thought of it

before. But if it would mean anything to you I'd see to it, personally, that it was done and also that in the press notices your name was mentioned in a complimentary way as having given us valuable aid and advice—something of that sort. I suppose you'd like to be put in a favorable light among your friends. Well, I don't blame you. I'm somewhat addicted to printers' ink myself. Was that the favor you wanted to ask of me?"

"Yas suh," I says, "in a way it 'tis an' then again, in a way, it 'tain't. Yere's the idee, boss: I wants to know frum you befo'hand, ef you please, w'en you perposes to mek the 'nouncemint 'cause on 'at se'f-same day they'll be 'nother 'nouncemint in the cullid papers settin' fo'th 'at the new firm of Poindexter & Petty 'spectfully desires to state 'at they is openin' a bookin'-agency fur cullid movin'-pitcher actors in the neighborhood an' 'at lakwise also, in connection wid it, a school fur trainin' cullid folks how to ack fur the screen will later on be added on."

He rears back in his chair and sort of smiles to himself, quiet-like.

"Oh, I see," he says. "I congratulate you on being wide-awake, anyhow. But," he says, "what do you know about training people to act for the screen?"

"Well, suh," I says, "I wuz aimin' to pick up a few p'inters yere an' thar fur future use. An' ef the wust comes to the wust," I says, "I kin get me a pair of these yere tall yaller leather leggin's an' a megaphome an' ack influential an' mebbe I could thar'by git by," I says.

"Some of the white directors are getting by with about that much equipment," he says. "Perhaps you could, too. Well, anyhow, the venture has my best wishes for its success. I can promise you a little more than that: It's probable that later on I can throw some business in your way."

"Thanky, suh, mos' kindly," I says. "'At wuz mainly whut I wuz hopin' fur."

"Do you need any funds to help you out in financing your undertaking?" he says.

"Naw suh, I thinks not," I says. "I got some ready cash on hand an' my partner

he's goin' put in a amount ekel to whut I risks. Ef I needs any more on top of 'at, I aims to ast Mr. Dallas Pulliam fur a small loan."

Then I tells him we lives at the Wheatley Court so he can write to me there as soon as he is ready to proceed ahead, and I bids him good-bye and goes back on up-town with hope singing inside of me like one of these here yellow-breast field-larks down home.

It turns out though it's a good thing we don't need no borrowed capital from Mr. Dallas' pocketbook at the outsetting because in lessen two months from that time Old Miss Bad Luck starts shooting at him with the scatter-gun of trouble, both barrels at once.

Which I will go into full details about all that mess the next time I takes my pen in hand.

CHAPTER XIII

Private Life

IT seems to me it's highly suitable that I should get to the edge of telling about Mr. Dallas' misfortunate visitations just as Chapter the Thirteenth is starting, which, as everybody knows full well already, thirteen is the unluckiest number there is in the whole alphabet.

When you projects with old Lady Thirteen you flirts with sudden disaster. With Mr. Dallas, though, his troubles don't come on all at once, like a stroke; they comes on sort of gradual, one behind the other, like the symptoms of a lingering complaint.

Up to a certain point everything with us has gone along very lovely, the same as usual, with parties occurring regular at the apartment and the Japanee boy cooking up fancy mixtures, and me serving drinks by the drove. Thanksgiving time we has a

special blow-out with twelve setting down to the table at once.

But Christmas is when we cuts loose and just naturally out-todos all previous todos. All day long folks is dropping in to sample the available refreshments and most of 'em likes the sample so well they camps right there till far into the night. I mingles up a big glass reservoir full of egg-nog, which it seems to give 'special satisfaction to one and all. The way these here guests of ours bails it up you'd think they was in a sinking skiff half a mile from shore. As he ladles out the first batch Mr. Dallas states that this here egg-nog is made according to a recipe which has been handed down in his family since right after the Revolutionizing War. But when she's took the second helping, Miss O'Brien, who's got a mighty peart way about her of saying things, allows that it shore must be older even than that—she says she's willing to bet it had a good deal to do with bringing on the revolution.

Of all the crowd that Mr. Dallas is in with, I likes her the best. She's got a powerful high temper and is prone to flare up

when matters don't go to suit her; but it seems like to me she ain't devoting so much of her time as some of the others is to seeing what she can get for nothing. Sometimes I catches her looking at Mr. Dallas like as if she's sort of sorry for him on account of some reason or other. But to look at him on this Christmas Day, doing his entertainingest best, you'd think nothing had ever bothered him and that nothing ever would. As long as that egg-nog holds out he's bound and determined the party shall be a success. Which it is!

But Mr. Bellows he ain't got no storage room for egg-nogs. Seemingly he figures that all them eggs and that rich cream and sugar and stuff will take up space which is needed for chambering the hard liquor. He just sets off in a corner with a bottle of Scotch and a bottle of squirtwater handy by, curing his drought, or striving to. He may not be such very good company but one thing they've got to say for him—he's a man of regular habits. You may not like the habits, but they certainly is regular. I hears Mrs. Gaylord saying once that Mr.

Bellows can hold any given number of drinks, sort of pressing her voice down on the word "given." She don't need to say it twice, neither, so far as I personally is concerned.

I got her the first time.

It's maybe two or three days after Christmas—anyhow it's somewheres around the middle of Christmas week—that I first takes notice of a sort of a change coming over Mr. Dallas' feelings. When there's nobody else round but just me and him he acts plumb bothered. His appetite is more picky-and-choosy than it used to be; and by these signs I can tell something is on his mind a-preying. On New Year's Eve he goes forth with his friends for a party but first they all stops by our place for what they calls appetizers and whilst they is gathered together it comes out that him and Miss Bill-Lee is now engaged. Not no regular announcement is made but all of a sudden, seems like, everybody present appears to know how things stand with him and her. Also, Miss Bill-Lee starts in treating him more or less like he belonged

to her. I don't scarcely know how to state it in words, but it's like as if up until now she's been holding a piece of property under mortgage but has finally decided for to foreclose on it and is eager for the papers to be fixed up in order for to begin making improvements and alterations. She's what you might call proprietory.

Well, I can't say the news is much of a shock to me, seeing what has been the general drift of events since last August when we first got here. But, on the other hand, neither I can't say that, considering everything, I'm actually overcome with joyfulness on Mr. Dallas' personal account.

I can't keep from thinking to myself that he's fixing to marry himself off into a mighty different set of folks from the kind he was born and brung up amongst. And I can't keep from thinking what a sight of difference there is betwixt this here Miss DeWitt and Miss Henrietta Farrell, which, as I said before, he was courting her before we moved to New York. One of 'em sort of puts me in mind of a rosebud picked out of the garden in the dew of the morning and

the other, which I means by that, Miss De Witt, reminds me of one of these here big pale magnolia blooms which has growed on the edge of a swamp. I ain't meaning no disrespect by having these thoughts; only I can't keep from having 'em.

I reckon it's having them ideas floating round in my head which makes me study Mr. Dallas 'specially close that New Year's Eve. For all that he's laughing and joking and carrying on, I figures that way down deep insides of him he ain't entirely happy over what's come out. By my calculations, he ain't got the true feelings which a forthcoming bridegroom should have. As near as I can judge, he ain't hopeful so much as he's sort of resignated. Also and furthermore, likewise, he's got a kind of a puzzled-up beflusterated look on his face as if he'd been took up short by something he wasn't exactly expecting to happen so soon, if at all. It ain't exactly bewildedment and it ain't exactly distressfulness; but it's something that's distant kinsfolks to both of 'em.

CHAPTER XIV

Oiled Skids

ANYWAY, that's that, as we says up here. I will now pass along to what comes to pass about two weeks later on. All along through them two weeks Mr. Dallas don't impress me like a young man should which he is starting out in the New Year full of good cheer and bright prospects. As the catch-word goes, he ain't at himself. At the breakfast table when I'm passing things to him he's often looking hard at nothing at all. It's plain his thoughts is far away and not so very happy in the place where they've strayed off to, neither.

Well, on this particular day, which it is along toward the middle of the present month of January, he don't get home from down-town until long after dinner-time and when he does get in he don't scarcely touch

a morsel to eat; he just pecks at the vittles. After dinner is over and the dishes washed up I passes through the hall on the way out, being bound for the Pastime Club to consultate with 'Lisses Petty touching on our own private affairs. Mr. Dallas had told me at dinner that I could have the evening off and there was not no reason why I should linger on. But as I passes the setting-room door I looks in and he's setting there, sort of haunched down in his chair, with his elbows resting on a little table and his face in his hands, seemingly mighty lonesome. Something seems to come over me and I steps in and I says to him, I says:

" 'Scuse me, Mr. Dallas, fur interruptin' yore ponderin's, but is they anythin' I kin do fur you befo' I goes on out?"

He sort of starts and looks up at me, and if ever I sees miserableness staring forth from a person's eyes I sees it now. He speaks to me then and what he says hits me with a jolt. Because this is what he says:

"Jeff, why is it that white people are forever committing suicide on account of their private worries but you never hear of a

darky killing himself for the same reason?"

I studies for a minute and then I says:

"Well, Mr. Dallas, I reckin it's 'is yere way: A w'ite man gits hisse'f in trouble an' he can't seem to see no way to git shet of it. An' so he sets down an' he thinks an' he thinks an' he thinks, and after 'w'ile he shoots hisse'f. A nigger-man gits in trouble an' he sets down an' he thinks an' he thinks an' he thinks—an' after 'w'ile he goes to sleep!"

He smiles the least little bit at that. But it is not no regulation smile—it's more like the ha'nting ghost of one.

"But suppose you're brooding so hard you can't sleep?" he says.

"I ain't never seen no nigger yit," I says, "but whut he could sleep ef the baid wuz soft 'nuff. They may not be many 'vantages in bein' black, the way the country is organized," I says, "but this is shore one place whar my culler has it the best."

He don't say anything back at me. So after lingering a little bit I starts to move on out. And then another one of them inmost promptings leads me to speak again:

"Mr. Dallas," I says, "sometimes we kin lif' the load of our pestermints ef only we talks 'bout 'em to somebody else. Sometimes," I says, "it's keepin' 'em all corked up tight on the insides of us w'ich meks the burden bear down so heavy. . . . Wuz they anything else, suh, 'at you wished fur to ast me?"

It seems like my words must have put a fresh notion in his head.

"Jeff," he says, "you're right. I've got to confide in somebody—or else explode. Besides," he says, "I figure that if there is one person in all the five or six million people in this town who's likely to be a real friend to me, it's you. And while my talking to you probably can't do any good, it certainly can't do any harm."

"Mr. Dallas," I says, "I is yore frien' an' yore desperit well-wisher, besides. Sence I been wukkin' fur you you shore is used me mouty kind. I ain't never had nary speck nur grain of complaint to find wid yore way of treatin' me. You's w'ite an' I is black," I says, "an' sometimes, seems lak to me, the two races is driftin' fu'ther apart

day by day; but all that ain't henderin' me frum havin' yore bes' intrusts at heart.

"An' so, suh, ef you feels lak givin' me yore confidences I'm yere to heed an' to hearken an' do my humble but level bes' fur to aid you, ef so be ez I kin."

"I believe you," he says, "and I'm grateful to you. . . . Well, Jeff, to put it plainly, I've gone and got myself tangled up in a bad mess."

"Whut way, suh?" I says.

"In two ways," he says; "in business—and in another way. I've been an ass, Jeff—a blind, witless ass. This life here was so different from any I'd ever known—so different and so fascinating—that it just swept me off my feet. I've been drifting along with my eyes shut, having my fling, letting today take care of itself and with no thought of tomorrow. As I look back on it, it strikes me I always have been more or less of a drifter. Down yonder, among our own people, there always was somebody who'd step in once in awhile and check me up. But up here in this big selfish greedy town, among strangers, I've had

nobody to advise me or to show me where I was making a fool of myself. And, believe me, I have made a fool of myself. I guess what I need is a guardian—only I doubt whether I'd find the money eventually to pay for his services. . . . Jeff, if I was free of these—these—well, these entanglements—I tell you right now I'd be willing to quit New York tomorrow and take the next train back home where I belong."

He studies a minute and then he continues to resume:

"Yes," he says, "I'd head for home in the morning—if I could. It has taken a hard jolt to open my eyes but, believe me, they're opened now. The chief trouble is, though, that even with them opened I can't see any way out of the tangle I'm in. Jeff, the big mistake I made at the start was that I tied up with the wrong outfit. I thought I was joining in with a group of typical successful live New Yorkers; I know now how wrong I was. There must be plenty of real people here—people who take life in moderation; people who are fair and kind-

ly and reasonable; people who can find pleasure in simple things and who don't pretend to know all there is to know, or to be what they're not. But I haven't met them; I've been too busy running with the other kind."

Down in my soul I says to myself there's a chance for him to pull out yet if he's beginning to see the brass-work shining through the gold plating which has so dazzled him up heretofores. Yes sir, if he's found out all by himself that New York City ain't exclusively and utterly composed of the Mr. H. C. Raynorses and the Mr. Hilary Bellowses and such, there certainly is hope for him still. All along, up to now, I've been saying to myself that it looks like the only future Mr. Dallas has to look forward to, is his past; but now I rejoices that he's done woke up from his happy trance. But of course I don't let on to him that such is my feelings. I merely says to him, I says:

"I ain't the one to 'spute wid you on 'at p'int, suh. Naw suh, not me! But whut's

the reason you can't pull out frum yere, ef you's a-mind to?"

At that he lights in and the language just pours out from him like a flood. There's a lot of rigmarole about business, and some parts of this I cannot seem to rightly get the straight of it into my head, but I'm pretty sure I gets the hang of all the main points clear enough. To begin with, I learns now for the first time that him and Mr. Raynor ain't actually been selling oil down-town; they've been selling oil-stocks, which as near as I can figure it out, an oil-stock is the same kin to oil that a milk-ticket is to milk, only it's like as if the man which sells you the milk-tickets ain't really got no cows rounded up yet but trusts in due time he'll be able to do so. Still, if there is folks scattered about who's willing to take the risk that the milkman will amass some cows somewhere and that the cows won't go dry or die on him or be grabbed by the sheriff and thereby leave the customers with a lot of nice new onusable milk-tickets on their hands why, the way I looks at it,

there ain't no reason why their craving for to invest should not be gratified.

It seems, furthermore, that Mr. Raynor ain't actually been selling as many oil stocks in the general market as he has let on. Leastwise, that is what Mr. Dallas suspicions, even if he can't prove it. When first they went into partners together last August, Mr. Dallas tells me he put up a large jag of money for his half-interest. He was content to let Mr. Raynor manage the business and keep the run of the books and all that, seeing as how Mr. Raynor had the experience in such matters and he didn't. Anyhow, he felt most amply satisfied with the gratifying amounts which Mr. Raynor kept handing over to him, saying it all was from the profits. But this very day there's been a show-down at the office growing out of Mr. Raynor having called on him to put up another big chunk of cash for running expenses, and whilst all the figures and all the details ain't been made manifest to Mr. Dallas yet, he's got mighty strong reasons to believe there really wasn't no profits to speak of and that the money he's

been drawing out all along was just his own money, which Mr. Raynor let him have it in order to keep him happy and contented whilst he was being sucked in deeper and deeper.

And so now, Mr. Dallas says, that's how it stands. If he goes on and on along the way he seems to be headed it's only a question of time till all his money will be plumb drained from him. He tells me that he'd be willing to pull out now and take his losses and charge 'em up to the expenses of getting a Wall Street education only, he says, he can't. I asks him then what's the reason he can't? He says because when the papers was drawed up—by Mr. Raynor—he obligated himself in such a twistified way that it seems he's bound hard and fast to stick to the bitter end. Of course, he says, he might start a lawsuit and throw the whole thing into the courthouse, but, even so, he's afraid he wouldn't have a leg left to stand on by reason of his having tied himself up so tight in writing; and anyway, he says, before he got through with a lawsuit

most doubtless the lawyers would have all the leavings.

To myself I says there is still another reason. I knows how much it would hurt Mr. Dallas' pride to have all the folks down home finding out that he's made another disasterful move in business. By roundabout ways it has come to my ears that he's been writing letters back telling about how well he's doing up here in New York and now, if it should come out in the papers that he's made one more bad bust-up on top of all them finance mistakes he committed before he come North, and he should have to go South again, broke and shamed at being broke, I reckons it would just about kill him. Besides which I knows full well from hearing Judge Priest talking in the past, that even in medium-sized towns lawyers is plenty costive persons to hire for an important lawsuit, and in the biggest town of all, where the lawyers naturally run bigger, they'd cost a mighty heap more.

When he gets through specifying the situation I gets another notion:

"I wonder," I says, sort of casual-like, "I wonder, Mr. Dallas, w'y it wuz 'at Mr. H. C. Raynor should a-picked this pertic'lar moment fur callin' on you fur a big bunch of cash, 'specially w'en ef he'd a-kept silence you'd a-prob'ly gone on wid him, never 'spicionin' anything wuz wrong?"

"Oh, I'm not so stupid but what I can figure that out," he says. "He's afraid so much of my money will be spent soon in another direction that he'll be deprived of the lion's share of what is left. He wants to strip me down close while the stripping is good."

"In 'nother direction?" I says, kind of musing. "I wonder whut 'at other direction kin be?"

"Can't you guess?" he says.

"Yas suh," I says, "I kin; but I didn' think 'twould be seemly fur me to start guessin' along 'at line widout you opened up the way fust."

"Jeff," he says, "I feel like a low-down dog to be dragging in a woman's name, even indirectly; and so I guess the best thing I can do in that direction is to keep

my mouth shut and take my medicine. It appears that here lately I've acquired the habit of committing myself to serious obligations at times when I'm not exactly aware of what I'm doing. At the moment, I don't seem to remember how it all comes about; then I wake up and I find I'm signed, sealed and delivered. I may be the damndest fool alive, but at least I'm an honorable fool. I was raised that way. Where my sense of personal honor is concerned I'm going to stick, no matter what the costs may be. I've been fed fat on flattery; now it's time for me to sup on sorrow awhile. Do you get my drift?"

"Yas suh, I think I does," I says. "Mr. Dallas," I says, " 'scuse me fur persumin' to keep on 'long 'is yere track, but is you right downright shore 'at you solemnly engaged yo'se'f in the holy bonds of wedlock to the lady in question?"

"I suppose I did," he says. "I must have. She assumes to think so—everybody else assumes to think so. And yet, as Heaven is my judge, I never intended to lead anybody to believe that I wanted to

make a marriage up here. It—it just happened, Jeff—that's all. I can see now how a lot of things have been happening and why. But what can I do to clear myself from either one of these two tangles? I've asked myself the question a hundred times since noon today and there's no answer. I can't lick Raynor at his own game; he's too wise; he's covered his prints too well. When I hinted at a lawsuit this afternoon he laughed in my face and told me to go ahead and sue. And, as for the other thing—well, unless I go through with it, against my will and my better judgment, it means a breach of promise suit, or I miss my guess. Besides, I still have some shreds of self-respect left. I can't deliberately try to break an engagement which, I suppose, I must have made in good faith."

"S'posen' the lady herse'f wuz to up an' brek it on her own 'sponsibility?" I says.

He laughed kind of scornful.

"No chance," he says; "no such luck for me! I've walked blindfolded into every trap that was set for me and now it's up to me to play the string out till the last penny

is gone. At the present rate that shouldn't take long. But see here, Jeff, I wonder why I sit here unburdening my woes on you? I know you would help me if you could, but what can you do? What can anybody do?"

"Mr. Dallas," I says, "you can't never tell. Sometimes the humblest he'ps out the greates'. Seems lak I heared tell 'at once't 'pon a time 'twuz the gabblin's of a flock of geese w'ich saved one of these yere up-state towns—Utica, or maybe 'twas Rome. I don't rightly remember now whut 'twas ailed 'at town; mebbe 'twuz fixin' to go fur William Jinnin's Bryant?—somethin' lak 'at! Anyway, the geese gits the credit in the records fur the savin' of it. An' ain't you never read whur a mouse comes mosey-in' 'long one time an' gnawed a lion loose frum the bindin' snares w'ich helt him? So, ez I says, you can't never tell. But I wonder would you do me a lil' small favor? I wonder would you read a piece out of a su'ttin book ef I wuz to bring it to you out of the liberary, an' w'en you'd done 'at ef you would go on to baid an' try to compose

yore min' an' git some needful sleep?"

"What's the idea?" he says.

"Nummine," I says. "Wait 'twell I fetches you the book."

So I goes and gets it down from the shelf where it belongs. It's the furtherest one of a long row of big shiny black books, which all of them has got different names. But the name of this one is: *Vet to Zym.*

He takes a look at it when I lays it before him, and he says:

"Why, this is a volume of the Encyclopedia! What bearing can this possibly have on what we've just been talking about?"

"Mr. Dallas," I says, "you's no doubt of'en seen ole Pappy Exall, w'ich he is the pastor of Zion Chapel, struttin' round the streets at home in times gone by? Well, the Rev'n. Exall may look lak one-half of a baby-elephant runnin' loose, but lemme tell you, suh, he ain't nobody's bawn fool. One time yere some yeahs back he got hisse'f into a kind of a jam wid his flock 'count of some of 'em bein' mos' onhighly dissatisfied wid the way he wuz handlin' the funds

fur to buy a new organ fur the church. Nigh ez they could figger it out, he'd done confisticated the organ money to his own pussonal an' private pu'pposes. Try ez they mout, they couldn't nobody in the congregation git no satisfaction out of him reguardin' of it. So one evenin', unbeknownst to him, a investigatin' committee formed itse'f, an' whilst he was settin' at the supper-table they come bustin' in on him an' demanded then an' thar how 'bout it? Wid one voice they called on him to perduce an' perduce fast, else they gwine start yellin' fur the police. Wid that he jest rise up frum his cheer an' he look 'em right in the eye an' he say to 'em, very ca'mlak: 'My pore bernighted brethren, in response to yore questions I directs yore prayerful considerations to Acts twenty-eighth an' seventeenth, also Timothy fust an' fifth, lakwise Kings sixth an' fust. Return to yore homes in peace an' read the messages w'ich is set fo'th in the 'foresaid Scriptures an' return to me yere on the morrow fur fu'ther guidance.' Well, they all dashes off fur to dig up they Bibles an'

see whut the answer is. Bright an' early next mawnin' they comes back to say 'at w'ile them is mighty fine-soundin' verses w'ich he bade 'em to read, still they ain't nary one of 'em w'ich seems to relate in any way whutsomever to a missin' organ fund. Then he smiles sort of pitiful-lak an' he reaches his fat hand down in his britches pocket an' he hauls out the money to the las' cent. The trick w'ich he had done played on 'em had give him a chanc't to slip out an' borrow 'nuff frum a couple of w'ite gen'elmen frien's of his'n fur to mek up the shortage. Whut he needed wuz time an' time wuz whut he got.

"Now, Mr. Dallas, I aims to borrow a lesson frum the example of ole Pappy Exall. I asts you to set yere an' read a chapter out of 'is yere book. It don't mek no diff'ence to me w'ich chapter 'tis you reads, jes' so it's a good long one. I done looked th'ough 'at book the other day an' most of the chapters in it is long an' all of 'em is tiresome. You jes' read 'twell you gits good an' sleepy an' 'en you go on to baid

an' refresh yo'se'f in slumber. An' in the meanwhile I aims to steddy right hard over these yere pressin' matters of your'n an' see ef I can't see the daylight breakin' th'ough somewhars."

I can tell by his looks that he ain't got no hope of success on my part, but he's so plumb wore out from worrying that he ain't got the spirit for to resist me. He says to me he won't promise to read the book, but he will promise to try to lay aside his botherments and go to bed early, which that is sufficient for me.

I leaves him there and I goes back to my room, after telephoning to 'Lisses Petty that something important has come up at our place which will detain me away from him for the time being. And then, when I gets to my room, I sets down and takes off my shoes. It seems like I always could think better when my feet was freed from them binding shoes.

When a nigger boy is fixing to run his fastest he's got to snatch his hat off and sail bareheaded; and I'm much the same way

about my feet when I craves to think. So, my shoes being off, I just rears back and sets in for to give the problems before me the fullest considerations.

CHAPTER XV

Vet to Zym

THE way it looks to me, here is Mr. Dallas Pulliam, one of the most free-hearted, good-willingest young white gentlemen that ever lived, about to be throwed to the raveling wolves. He's elected to be the live meat, with a two-sided race on to see which one of the contesters can pick and clean him the quickest. And so, if he's going to be saved for future references, something is got to be done and done mighty speedy, too, else there won't be nothing left but the polished bones.

I therefore splits up my thinking into two parts; first I studies a spell about the one proposition and then I studies a spell about the other. To tell the truth, though, I don't need to have so very many concernings over the case of Mr. H. C. Raynor. I did not let on to Mr. Dallas what was

passing through my mind, but at the very same instant when he turned to me for help after telling about the row down-town at the oil offices with Mr. Raynor, I hit spang on what might turn out to be proper medicine for what ails the gentleman. It ain't so very long, setting there in my room by myself, before the scheme begins to sort of routine itself out and look like something.

With regards to him I'm going mainly on the facts that he's like a lot of these here Northerners which ain't never been down South to speak of, and is therefore got curious ideas about the South in general. Long time before this I has took note that he thinks a colored person naturally enjoys being called "a dam black rabbit" or "a worthless black scoundrel" whilst he's waiting on white folks. Also, he can't seem to get over my failing to say "Yas, Massa" and "No, Massa" when Mr. Dallas asks me a question; and I can tell he's kind of put out because I don't go round speaking of myself as "dis nigga" this and "dis nigga" that and "dis nigga" the other thing. In other words, I ain't living up to the

character of the imaginary kind of a Southern-raised black man, which he's been led to expect I'd be from reading some of these here foolish writings which they gets out up here from time to time.

I knows full well what his sensations is in these matters, not only from the look on his face, but from one or two things which I has overheard him saying in times past. So now I just puts two and two together, and I says to myself that if he's entertaining them misled ideas about my race, he doubtless is also got the notion in his head that every quality white gentleman from down South, and more especially them which hails from Kentucky, totes a pistol on the flank and is forever looking for a chance to massacrete somebody against which he's took a disfancy. I remembers now that he asked me once how many feuds there was going on in our part of the state at the present time. Rather than disappoint him, I tells him several small ones and one large one. And another time he wants to know from me whether they ever tried anybody in earnest for shooting somebody down our

way. Secretively, at the time, I pities his ignorance, but I ain't undertaking to wean him from his delusions, because if that's his way of thinking it ain't beholden on me to try to educate him different. Looking back on it now, I'm mighty glad I didn't try neither, because in the arose situation I figures that his prevailing beliefs is going to fall right in with my plans.

Inside of half an hour I is through with him and ready to tackle the other matter, which is a harder one, any way you look at it. I takes my head in both my hands and I says to myself: What kind of a lady is this here one we got to deal with? With her raisings, what does she probably like the best in the world? What does she probably hate the most in the world? What would scare her off and what would make her mad, and what is it would probably only just egg her on? What would she shy from, and what would she jump at? Where would she be reckless, and where would she be careful? And so on and so forth.

All of a sudden—*bam!*—a notion busts

right in my face. Casting round this way and that for a starter to go by, I recalls to mind what I heard Judge Priest norrating years ago touching on a funny will which a rich man in an adjoining county to ours drawed up on his death-bed, and how the row over it was fit out in the courts, and with that I says to myself, I says:

"Hallelujah to my soul, ole problem, I shore does believe I's got you whar the wool is short—doggone me ef I don't!"

It's getting on towards eleven o'clock when I puts my shoes back on and slips in to see what Mr. Dallas is doing. He's still setting right where I left him, with the book in front of him. But his eyes, seems to me, is beginning to droop a little. Well, there ain't nobody living could linger two hours over that there old *Vet to Zym* without getting all drowsied up.

"Mr. Dallas," I says, "I thinks the daylight is startin' to sift in th'ough the cloakin' clouds. I seems to see a bright streak, in fact a couple of streaks. But, even so, I is got to be lef' free to wu'k things out my own way. Is you agreeable, suh?"

"Jeff," he says, "I'm in your hands. There's no one else into whose hands I can put myself. What do you want me to do?"

"Well suh," I says, "first I wants you fur to go tek off yore things an' git yo'se'f settled in baid fur the night. Tha's the starter."

"Agreed," he says—"and then, what?"

"Well, next," I says, "I don't want you to go down-town a-tall tomorrow. I want you fur to stay right whar you now is. In the mawnin' keep 'way frum the telephone. Ef I ain't yere to answer it jes' you an' Koga let it ring its haid off an' don't pay it no mind. In the afternoon you may have a 'portant visitor answerin' to the entitlemints of Mr. H. C. Raynor, Esquire. Befo' he gits yere I'll tell you whut's to come off betwixt you two, purvided the perliminary 'rangemints, ez conducted by me, has wukked out all right. But I ain't aimin' to tell you the full plans yit—too much is got to happen in the meantime. Tomorrow is plenty time."

"Just as you say," he says. "I'm going to my room now."

"Wait jes' one minute, please suh," I says, as he gets up. "Mr. Dallas, you ain't ownin' no pistol, is you?"

"What would I be doing with a pistol?" he says, sort of puzzled. "I never owned one in my life—I don't believe I ever shot one off in my life." Then a kind of a shamed smile comes onto his face. "Why Jeff," he says, "you aren't taking seriously what I said early tonight about suicides, are you? You needn't worry—I'm not thinking of shooting myself yet awhile."

"I ain't worryin' 'bout 'at," I says; "I ain't figgerin' on you shootin' yo'se'f, neither I ain't figgerin' on yore havin' to shoot nobody else. Never'less, though," I says, "an' to the contrary notwidstandin', sence you ain't got no pistol, you's goin' to have one befo' you is many hours older—a great big shiny fretful-lookin' one."

"What am I to do with it after I get it?" he says.

"Mr Dallas," I says, "please, suh, go on to bed lak you promised me. I got a haid-ache now, clear down to the quick, jes' frum answerin' my own questions."

I speaks this to him just like he is a little boy and I is his nurse. And off he goes, just like a wore-out, desponded, onhappy little boy.

CHAPTER XVI

Lady-Like!

AS I looks back on it now, after the passing of two weeks or so, it seems to me I never traveled so fast and covered so much ground in all my born days as I did on the next day following immediately along after this here night before. For awhile you just naturally couldn't see me for the dust.

In the first place, right after breakfast-time, I glides out and I scoots uptown and I puts up ten dollars for security and thereby I borrows the loan of one of his extra spare revolvers off of a yellow-complected person named Snake-Eye Jamison, which it is his habit to go round the colored districts recommending himself as the coroner's friend and acting very gunnery towards parties that he gets dissatisfied with. I don't know how many folkses he's killed

in his life, but he must bury his dead where they falls, because I ain't never had none of the gravestones pointed out to me. But, anyway, he goes heeled on both hips at all times. But I makes him onload her before he turns her over to me, because I is not taking no chances on having that thing going off accidental and maybe crippling somebody. I totes this here large and poisonous-looking chunk of dark-blue hardware back to the apartment and stores it in a safe place where I can put my hand upon it on short notices.

Then I waits till Mr. Dallas is in the bathroom with the water running so as to hide the sound of my voice, and I goes to the telephone and I calls up Miss Bill-Lee's [1] number over on Riverside Drive.

She must've rose early so as to have her complexion laid on so it'll get set good before she goes out for the day; because it's her which answers my call instead of the maid.

[1] Note.—It has just dawned upon Jeff's volunteer amanuensis that throughout the preceding pages of this narrative, Jeff's more or less phonetic rendering of this word was an effort on his part to deal with the Gallicized pronunciation of an English diminutive for a common proper name, to wit: *Billy*.

I tells her it's me on the wire and I asks her, as a special favor, can I run over to her flat as soon as it's agreeable, to speak to her on a very important matter? She says yes, so eager-like it must be she's expecting I'm fetching a present from Mr. Dallas same as I has done quite often before this. She says I can come at ten o'clock.

Ten o'clock and I'm at the door. She's in her sitting-room waiting for me. She looks sort of disappointed when she sees I ain't brought along no flowers nor no candy nor no jewelry-box nor nothing with me; but she welcomes me very kindly. I don't lose no time getting going.

"Miss DeWitt," I says, making my voice as winning as I can, "now 'at you an' Mr. Dallas is fixin' to git married to one 'nother I been wonderin' 'bout whut's goin' become of me in the shuffle. I 'preciates 'at he laks me fust-rate; but he idolizes you so deeply 'at I knows he wouldn't keep on keepin' me nur nobody else round him widout he wuz shore 'at you laked 'em, too. Tha's whut's been worryin' me—the question whether

you felt disposed agreeable to me? An' so, after broodin' over the matter fur goin' on it's nearly a week, I finally has tuck the liberty of comin' to speak to you 'bout it. Yassum!"

"Jefferson," she says kind of indifferent and yet not hostile, "I have nothing against you—in fact I rather like you. If your services are satisfactory to Dallas I shall have not the slightest objection to his keeping you on as his servant."

"Thanky, ma'am," I says, "hearin' you say 'at frum yore own lips su'ttinly teks a big load offen my mind. I strives ever to please. 'Sides, I got a mighty winnin' way wid chillen. I'll come in handy w'en it comes to he'pin' out wid the nursin' an' all lak 'at."

She sets up straight from where she's been kind of half-laying down and some of that chain-gang jewelry of hers gives a brisk rattle.

"Children!" she says, plenty startled. "What in the world are you talking about?"

I answers back like I'm expecting of course she'll understand.

"W'y," I says, "the chillen w'ich enshores 'at Mr. Dallas don't lose out none in the final cuttin' up of the estate," I says.

By now she's rose bolt upright on her feet. All that languidsome manner is fled from her, and her voice is sharper than what I ever has heard it before.

"What's that?" she says, quite snappy. "What's that you are saying? Do you mean to tell me that Dallas has been married before—that he has a child, or more than one child, hidden away somewhere?"

"Oh, nome," I says, very soothing, "nothin' lak 'at. 'Course Mr. Dallas ain't never been married—up 'twell now he's practically been heart-whole an' fancy-free. Yassum! I wuz merely speakin'—ef you'll please, ma'am, 'scuse me—of the chillen, w'ich natchelly 'll be comin' long ez purvided fur onder the terms of the ole gen'elman's will, you know. Tha's all I meant."

"Will!" she says. "What will? Whose will? Here, you, give me the straight of this thing! I haven't the faintest idea what it's all about."

"Now!" I says, acting like I'm overcome

with a sudden great regret. "Ain't that jes' lak me, puttin' my big foot in it, gabblin' 'bout somethin' w'ich it ain't none of my affairs? Most doubtless, Mr. Dallas, he's been savin' it all up ez a happy surprise fur you. An' now, in my innocence an' my ign'ence, I starts blabbin' it fo'th unbeknowst. Lemme git out of yere, please ma'am, 'fore I gits myse'f in any deeper 'en whut already I is in!"

She comes sailing across the floor right at me. Them big floating black eyes of hers seems to get smaller and sharper until they bores into me the same as a pair of sharp gimblets.

"You stay right where you are," she says, commanding as a major's-general. "You don't leave this room until I get this mystery straightened out."

"Please, ma'am, I'd a heap ruther you spoke to Mr. Dallas 'bout it," I says, pretending to be pleading hard. "No doubt in due time he'll confide to you all 'bout the way the property is tied up an' 'bout his paw's views ez 'spressed in the will, an' also 'bout the way the matter stands be-

twixt him an' his twin brother, Mr. Clarence, an' all the rest of it."

"Twin brother!" she says, and by now she's been jolted so hard she's mighty near to the screeching point. "Where is this twin brother? I never heard of him—never dreamed there was such a person. Say, are you crazy or am I?"

"W'ich 'at do settle it!" I says, very lamentful. "Ef Mr. Dallas ain't told you 'bout his twin brother neither, it suttinly is a shore sign to me 'at he wuz aimin' to purserve ever'thing ez a precious secret frum you fur the time bein'. I 'spects he'll jest more'n snatch me ball-haided fur this, Miss DeWitt. Please, ma'am, don't say nothin' to him 'bout my havin' give you the tip, will you?"

"I don't want tips," she says, "I want facts. And I'm going to have them here and now—and from you! If you want to get out of here with a whole skin you'll quit your vague mumblings about wills and children and estates and twin brothers that I never heard of before, and you'll tell me in plain words the entire story, whatever it

is, that has been held back from me so carefully. You tell it beginning to end!"

"Yassum," I says, "jest ez you wishes, ma'am." I tries to make my voice sound like I'm scared half to death, which it don't call for no great amount of putting-on on my part neither, because she has done shed all her laziness and all her silkiness and all her smoothness same as a blue-racer sheds his skin in the spring of the year, and she's done bared her real het-up dangersome self before me. "Jest ez you wishes," I says, "only I do trus' an' pray at you'll purtec' me frum Mr. Dallases' wrath w'en he finds out I done spilt ever'thin' so premanture-lak."

"Forget it!" she says. "It strikes me I'm the one who needs protection if anybody does. Now, without any more dodging or ducking you give me the truth, understand? No original embroidery of your own, either —the cold truth, all of it! And if I find out afterwards that you've been holding back a single detail from me——!"

With that she stops short and pins me with them eyes of hers. I can't hardly

keep from flinching back from before her. If she was a hornet it'd be high time to start one of the hands off to the nearest drugstore after the soothing ointments, because somebody certainly would be due to get all stung up. Rejoiceful though I is inside of me to see how nice she's grabbed at all the hints which I has flung out to her like fishing-baits, one after another, I'd be almost as glad if I was outside that room talking to her through the keyhole. But it's shore dependent on me to set easy and keep on play-acting and not make no slips. Things is going well, but they has got to go still better yet if she's to swallow down the main dose.

CHAPTER XVII

Sable Plots

SO I spreads out both my hands like as if I'm plumb cowed down and licked, and then I starts in handing out to her the yarn which I'd spent half the night before piecing it together in my mind. It's a mighty nice kind of romancing, if I do say so, and full of plausibleness, 'specially that part of it which is built up on what I remembers the old judge having told me about the curious case which come up that time in one of the adjoining counties. But the rest of it, including the most fanciest touches, such as Mr. Clarence and the old maiden-lady aunt and the two sets of triplets and all, has been made up to order right out of my own head, and I asks credit.

And now, whilst I'm setting there telling it to her and watching her close to see how she's taking it, I'm praying to the

Good Lord, asking Him will He please, Master, forgive me for onloading such a monstrous pack of what-ain't-so on an onsuspecting and worked-up lady. And at the same time I'm hoping the spirit of Mr. Dallases' dear departed father, which he was one of the nicest, quietest old gentlemen that ever breathed, won't come ha'nting me for low-rating his memory so scandalous. I knows full well he must be turning over in the grave faster and faster every minute which passes. I only can trust he don't see fit to rise from it.

"Miss DeWitt," I says, "lissen, please, an' you shell know all: You see, ma'am, ever'thin' in this connection dates back to the time w'en Mr. Dallases' paw made his dyin' will some six or seven yeahs ago. 'Course, as you doubtless has learned befo' now, he lef' the bigges' part of the estate tied up."

"I don't know any such thing," she says, breaking in again and even more savage-like than before. "Do you mean to tell me Dallas is not the sole master of his own property?"

I sort of stammers and hesitates like I'm astonished that she don't know that part of it, neither. My hanging back only makes her yet more fierce to hear the rest.

"Wellum," I goes on to say when finally I sees she's liable to blow clean up if I delays further, "the real facts of the case is 'at he ain't actually got no property a-tall, ez you mout say. He only draws down one-ha'f the intrust frum it. He don't get nigh ez much income, neither, ez whut folkses mout think frum his free way of spendin' his money right an' lef'. Ez a matter of fact, an' in the strictes' confidences, Miss DeWitt," I says, "he is mos' gin'elly alluz in debt to the trustees by reason of him bein' overdrawed. But, course," I says, " 'at part of it ain't neither yere nor thar, is it? Ef Mr. Dallas wants to slather his money 'bout so fast that ever' dollar he spends looks to outsiders lak it's ten or twelve, tha's his bus'ness. Lemme git back on the main track. Le's see, now? I wuz specifyin' to you 'bout the will, wuzn' I?

"Well, it's lak this: W'en folkses down

our way heared the terms of the will they wuz a heap of 'em said the old gen'elman's mind must a-went back on him in his last sickness fur him to be layin' down any sech curious 'quiremints ez them wuz. Yassum, some even went fu'ther 'en 'at. Some went so fur ez to say it wuz the streak of onsanity w'ich runs in the Pulliam fambly croppin' out ag'in in a fresh place."

"Oh, so it's insanity now!" she says. "The longer you talk the more interesting things I learn. Go on—go on!"

"Yassum," I says, "I'm goin'. Yassum, they wuz quite a host of folkses w'ich come right out an' said Mr. Dallas an' Mr. Clarence, ary one or both of 'em, would be amply justified in contestin' the will on the grounds 'at the late lamentable wuz out of his haid at the time he drawed it up. But no, ma'am, not them two! I figgers they knowed they own dear paw well 'nuff to know the idee w'ich he toted in his mind. 'Sides w'ich, all the members of that fambly is sort of techy on the subjec' of the lil' trickle of onsanity 'at flows in the blood, w'ich, I reckin, they natchelly is to be

'scused fur that. An' ef one or the other of 'em went to the big cote-house tryin' to bust up the will on the claim 'at the ole gen'elman didn't rightly know whut he wuz doin' to'des the last, it'd only quicken up the talk 'bout the craziness strain. An' so, on 'count of the Pulliam pride an' all, they jes' lef' it stand lak it wuz. An' 'en, on top of 'at, Mr. Clarence he turned sort of onsatisfactory in the haid an' he strayed off an' wuzn' heared of ag'in till yere recently. An' 'en, soon ez Mr. Clarence wuz found, Mr. Dallas he come on up yere an' you an' him met an'——"

"In Heaven's name, quit drooling and get somewhere," she says, making her words pop like one of these here whiplashes. "What did the will say?"

"Yassum," I says, "yassum, I jest is reached 'at p'int, now. The will say 'at the estate is to be helt in trust fur the time bein' an' 'en w'en the two sons comes of age they is free to marry, only they is both bound to marry somebody or other befo' they reaches they twenty-fif' birthday. An' the one w'ich has the most chillen to his

credit at the end of five yeahs frum his weddin' day, he gits the main chunk of the prop'ty, whilst the other is cut down to jest——"

"The most children?" she says; only by now she's saying it so savigrous that she practically is yelling it. "The most——?"

"Yassum," I says, "tha's it—the most chillen. You see, ma'am, they seems to run to chillen, someway, the Pulliamses does. When a Pulliam gits married, look out fur baby-carriages, tha's all. They don't seem to have chillen by driblets, neither, lak some people does. They is more apt to have 'em by triplets. They is two complete sets of triplets on record in times gone past, an' ever' generation kin be depended on to perduce at leas' one set of twins.

"Or even more! Now, f'rinstances, you tek Mr. Dallas an' Mr. Clarence—both twins. Tek they father befo' 'em an' they maiden aunt, Miss Sarah Pulliam, deceasted—twins some mo'. Only, you never heared much 'bout Miss Sarah in her lifetime owin' to her bein' kep' onder lock

an' key fur spasms of a kind of wildness comin' over her now an' then. Then ag'in, amongst Mr. Dallases' own brothers an' sisters, tek his two lil' twin sisters, not to mention the four or five singles w'ich come 'long right stiddy an' reg'lar. Yassum, it's been 'at way in the famby fur ez fur back ez the oldest inhabitant kin remember.

"But the gineration w'ich Mr. Dallas belongs to, it turned out sickly fur the most part, an' so, by the time the ole gen'elman come to die, all his chillen had died off on him, 'scusin' Mr. Dallas an' Mr. Clarence, w'ich them two wuz all they wuz left out of a big swarm. Oh, I jedges the paw knowed whut he wuz 'bout! I reckin he craved 'at his breed should once more multiply freely an' replenish the earth wid a whole multitude of lil' Pulliamses. An' so he purvided fur a healthy competition betwixt his two sons to see——"

"Wait!" she says. "Let me see if I understand you? You say that by the terms of that old maniac's will the bulk of his estate was tied up so to go eventually to the

son who had the most children five years after marriage. Well, then, what does the remaining son—the loser—get?"

"He gits a hund'ed an' fifty dollars a month fur life—I think tha's whut it come to," I says. "Mebbe it mout be a hund'ed an' sebenty-five, I won't be shore. An' he also draws down fifty dollars a month extry fur each chile he's got livin'. But tha's all. The home place an' the tobacco bus'ness an' the money in the bank an' all else, they goes to the winner, onlessen each one, at the end of them five yeahs is got a ek'el number of chillen in w'ich case the estate is divided even-stephen betwixt 'em. Yassum!"

"Then why didn't both brothers marry as soon as they came of age?" she asks me, sort of suspicious. But I was expecting that very question to come forth sooner or later, and I was prepared beforehand for it.

"Wellum," I says, "you see, I reckin Mr. Dallas figgered they wuzn' no need to be in a rush seein' 'at Mr. Clarence wuz so kind of ondependable. Ef the truth must

be knowed, Mr. Clarence wuz downright flighty. He had spells w'en he'd furgit his own name an' go wanderin'. Yassum! An' right after he come of age he took a 'specially severe spell an' he sauntered so fur away they plum' lost track of him. It wasn't 'twell last July 'at he wuz located ag'in. It seems lak he'd been detained somewhars out West in a sort of a home whar they keeps folks w'ich is liable to fits of chronic oneasiness in the haid. But now, suddenly, his refreshed memory had come back to him an' the doctors pernounced him cured an' turned him loose ag'in; an' the latest word wuz 'at he wuz thinkin' 'bout gittin married down in Texas or one of 'em other distant places, out yonderways. So Mr. Dallas must a-realized 'at 'twuz up to him to stir his stumps an' git hisse'f married off, too; 'specially ez he had done passed his twenty-fo'th birthday the month befo'. Well, seemed lak, he couldn't find no young lady down home w'ich wuz suitable to his fancies, although some folks did say, quiet-lak, 'at they wuz a local prejudice springin' up on the part

of parents ag'inst havin' they daughters marryin' him. But betwixt you an' me, ma'am, I never tuk no stock in 'at, 'cause most of the time Mr. Dallas is jest ez rationable ez whut you an' me is. It's only w'en he gits excited 'at he behaves a lil' peculiar-lak. Well, anyways, Mr. Dallas he come on up yere an' he met you. So now it looks lak ever'thing is goin' turn out all right, an' mebbe we'll beat out Mr. Clarence after all, in w'ich case Mr. Dallas won't have to be worryin' at the end of five yeahs 'bout whar he's goin' to rake up the cash to pay back the money w'ich he's overdrawed out of the estate, nur nuthin'. So that's how come me to mention chillen w'en I fust come in, ma'am. An' I trusts you understan's?"

And with that I smiles at her like I'm expecting that now, seeing she knows all the tidings, she'll be jubilated over the prospects, too.

But she ain't smiling—I lay she ain't got a smile left in her entire system. She's mighty nigh choking, but it ain't no happy emotion that she's choked up with; if you

was a blind man you could a-told that much from the sounds she's making. She's saying things fast and furious. Remarks is just foaming from her; but the trouble is she keeps on getting her statements all jumbled up together so they don't make good sense. And yet, notwithstanding, I still can follow her thoughts. I catches the words: "*most* children"—she duplicates that several times—and "twins" and "triplets" and "insanity" and "one hundred and fifty dollars a month." And all mixed in with this is loose odds and ends of language which seems to indicate she thinks somebody has been withholding something back on her or trying to take an unfair advantage of her, or something. She certainly is in a swivit. A little more and she'd be delirious— she would so!

All of a sudden she flings herself out of the room, with her necklaces and things clashing till she sounds like a runaway milk-wagon, and she makes for the telephone in the hall, and I can hear her trying very frantic to get our number rung up. For a minute my heart swarms up in my

throat; anyhow, some of my organs swarms up there where I can taste 'em. I'm so afraid Mr. Dallas may forget his promise to me and come to the 'phone! If he does, the whole transaction is liable to be busted up just when I've strove so hard to fix everything nice and lovely. That's why my heart climbs up in my windpipes. But after a little bit I can breathe easy some more because it's plain, from what I overhears, that Central tells her she can't get no responsives from the other end of the wire. So then, after one or two more tries, she gives up trying and she comes back into the setting-room, still spilling mumbling words, but "children" continues to be the one she seems to favor the most, and she says to me that she has a message to send to Mr. Dallas, which she wants me for to take it to him.

Still playing my part, I says to her I truly hopes there ain't going to be nothing in the message which will put Mr. Dallas in a bad humor with me. But she don't appear to hear my pleading voice. She's already set down over at a little writing-

desk in the corner, and she's got a pen in her hand and she's writing away like a house on fire. The pen is squeaking the same as if it was in torment, and them five or six bracelets on her arm is clinking sweet music to my ear. I ain't no seventh son of a seventh gun, which they tells me they has the gift of prophecy laid upon them at birth, nor yet I ain't no mind-reader, but, even so, I says to myself that I don't need but one guess at the true nature of what 'tis she's writing.

She gets through quite soon—there's only just one single sheet of paper, and she folds it up and creases it hard like she's trying to mash it in two, and she jams it in an enveloper and seals the enveloper and shoves it into my waiting hand, and she says to me:

"There! Now you take this note to the man you work for, immediately!"

"Yassum," I says; "is they any answer to come back?"

"Answer?" she says, "No—no—*no*—NO!"

So I goes right out, leaving her still saying it at the top of her voice. It seems to

me it's high time to go, if not higher. Besides, it's mighty hard trying to carry on a conversation with an overwrought-up lady which she has only got one word left in stock, which that one is a little short word like "No."

So I takes my foot in my hand and I marvils thence from there fast as ever my willing legs can take me. And as I goes along on my way, speeding 'cross-town bound for our quarters, I'm trying to think of a stylish word which in times gone by I has heard some of the white folks use as a pet name for a note from one loving soul to another. Pretty soon it comes to me—*billet doux!*

I stops right still where I is at:

"Bill-Lee do, huh?" I says to myself. "Yas, sometimes Bill-Lee do. But this time—glory, hallelujah, amen!—Bill-Lee do not!"

CHAPTER XVIII

White Hopes

WHEN you is engaged in going to and fro in the world doing good deeds you certainly can cover a surpassing lot of ground in a short time. It's striking ten when I knocks at the lady's door; it ain't eleven yet, by the lacking of a few minutes, when I is home again and has handed over the note to Mr. Dallas and is watching his face whilst he reads it. He's got one of these here open faces, and I can tell, easy enough, exactly what thoughts goes through his mind. Mostly he's full of a great relief—that's plain to see—but mixed in with it is a faint kind of a lurking regretfulness that she should a-broke loose from him so abrupt this-a-way. If folks has got the least crumb of vanity in 'em it shows forth when a love affair is going to pieces on 'em.

And Mr. Dallas is not no mite different in this matter from the run of creation. Even so, he's displayed more joysomeness than anything else when it comes to the end of what she's wrote him. He reaches out after my hand for to shake it good and hard and hearty.

"Jeff," he says, "my hat's off to you—you're the outstanding wonder of the century. I judge it's hardly necessary for me to tell you what's in this note?"

"I been able," I says, "to mek my own calculations, suh. I reckins ef I wuz put to it, I could guess."

"How did you ever succeed in doing it?" he says.

"Mr. Dallas," I says, "the main p'int is 'at it's done—ain't 'at so, suh?"

"Agreed," he says; "but there are hints here—hints is a mild word—at things I don't in the least understand. Now, for example——"

"Mr. Dallas," I says, "ast me no questions, please suh, an' I'll tell you no lies. Lyin' don't come natchel to me, ez you knows—I has to strain fur it."

"Very well," he says, "have it your own way; I won't press you. The proof is in my hand that you accomplished what you set out to do; and seeing that I had no part or parcel in it I figure it's up to me to show less curiosity and more gratitude."

"Nummine the gratitudes part yit aw'ile," I says. "Us is got a heap more to 'complish 'fore the sun goes down tonight. It's only jest a part of the load w'ich is been lifted—bear 'at in mind, suh. The case of Mr. H. C. Raynor is yit remainin' to be 'tended to."

"You've already shown me what you can do, even though I'm left in the dark, as to the exact methods you use in these big emergencies," he says. "I'm still following your lead. What comes next?"

All through this he's been walking up and down the floor like he was drilling for the militia. So I induces him for to set down and be still, and I proceeds to specify further.

I says to him, I says:

"Mr. Dallas," I says, "these here chronic Noo Yawkers is funny people—some of

'em. 'Cause they knows they own game they thinks they ain't no other games wu'th knowin'. 'Cause they thinks the Noo Yawk way of doin' things must be the only suitable way, they don't concern theyselves 'bout the way an outsider mout tackle the same proposition. To be so bright ez they is in some reguards, they is the most ign'ent in others ever I seen. Now, 'cordin' to my notions, w'en you gits 'em on strange ground, w'en you flings a novelty slam-bang in they faces, they ain't got no ways an' means figgered out fur meetin' it an' they's liable to git all mommuxed up an' swep' right off they feet."

"Jeff," he says, "you have gifts which I never fully appreciated before. You are not only a philosopher but a psychologist as well."

"Boss," I says, "you does me too much honor. So fur ez I knows, I ain't nary one of them two things w'ich you jest called me. I only merely strives fur to use the few grains of common-sense w'ich the Good Lawd give me, tha's all 'tis. Tubby shore, I got one 'vantage on my side: I kin

look at w'ite folkses' affairs frum a cullid stan'p'int whar'as they kin only look at 'em frum they own. Ef the shoe wuz on t'other foot you doubtless could he'p me; but in the present case it's possible I kin he'p you. I's on the outside lookin' in, whilst you is on the inside lookin' out, ez you mout say; so mebbe I kin 'scover things w'ich you'd utterly overlook. The fly beholes whut 'scapes the elephant's eye an' the minner gives counsel to the whale. Mebbe I ain't gittin' the words routined right fur to 'spress my meanin's, but, even so, I reckin you gits my drift, don't you, suh?"

"I follow you perfectly, with an ever-increasing admiration," he says. "Go ahead. This look like our lucky day anyhow—let's press the luck!"

"Yas suh," I says. "Now, f'rinstances," I says, "you tek the 'foresaid Mr. H. C. Raynor. W'en you spoke to him of lawsuits yistiddy he mouty nigh laffed in yore face, didn't he? Well, 'at shows he ain't got no dread of lawsuits. Prob'ly he's been mixed up in 'em befo'; most doubtless

he knows the science of lawsuitin' frum the startin'-tape to the home-stretch. An' lakwise he'd have the bulge on you w'en it come to makin' figgers wu'k out lak he wanted 'em to, so he'd 'pear to be inside his rights an' you'd 'pear to be on the wrong side of the docket. I persume he's had a 'bundance of 'sperience in sech matters, w'ich you ain't. He knows his own system an' he knows you don't know it, w'ich fortifies him yit fu'ther. All right, suh, so much fur that. But s'posen, now, on the other hand, we wuz to layway him an' jump out of ambushmint at him wid a brand-new notion? I jedges he ain't got no ripperta-tion to speak of, so losin' whut lil' scraps of it he mout have left wouldn't keep him 'wake nights worryin', 'specially effen he'd already salted away the cash w'ich he craved. But he do own somethin' w'ich he prizes most highly or elsewise I misses my guess—he's got a skin w'ich he's managed some way, by hook or crook, to keep it whole up to now. An' ef right out of a clear sky he suddenly wuz faced wid a prospect of havin' it all punctured up in

mebbe fo', five, or six places, I figgers he mout start singin' a diff'unt song frum the one w'ich at the present 'pears to be his fav'rit' selection.

"There's just one thing more," I says, "Prob'ly it's 'scaped yore 'tention, Mr. Dallas, but I's been steddyin' Mr. H. C. Raynor off an' on an' I has took note 'at he's got some very curiousome idees in his haid 'bout the kind of folkses you an' me is. Didn't it never occur to you, suh, 'at he thinks practically all Southern w'ite gen'elmen is a heap more hot-haided an' fiery-blooded 'en whut the run of 'em really is? Didn't it never occur to you frum his talk, 'at he figgers 'at most ev'ry thorough-bred Kintuckian is prone to settle his argumints wid fo'ty-fo' calliber ca'tridges? Well, I's read his thoughts 'long them lines, even ef you ain't, an' I'm shore I got him placed right. Tha's whut I'm countin' on now, suh," I says; "tha's whar'in lays our maindest dependince. Does you see whut I'm aimin' at, suh? Or does you don't?"

He ain't needing to answer. His face is beginning to light up and his eyeballs is

starting to dance in his head. So I knows the time is come for me to cease from preambling and get right down to cases. Which I accordingly does so.

I tells him the greatest part of what I aims to do. I tells him what-all he's to do. I tells him what 'll be the signal for him to bust into the picture. I tells him how he should deport hisself after he's done so. I can tell him what should be done up to a certain point, but, past that, as I says to him, he'll just have to let Nature take its coarseness.

I labors over him until I can tell he's getting his mad up—his hands begins to twitch a little and his jaw sort of locks and there's a kind of a reckless spunky look stealing onto his expression. That suits me. I wants him to be even more nervous than what he is now when the performance starts—the nervouser he is the better for our purposes.

When his dander is worked up to suit and getting more worked-up and more danderish every minute, I leaves him there and I goes out into the hall and I rings up

the oil office. One of the help answers to my call and I tells him to please get Mr. Raynor on the line right speedy. In about a minute his voice comes to me over the wire.

"Hello!" he says, very sharp-like, "hello! —who is it?"

"Mr Raynor," I says, "this yere is Jeff Poindexter, speakin' fur Mr. Dallas. He desires 'at you will please run on up yere to our place soon ez you kin git yere. He ain't seemin' to be hisse'f today an' so he ain't aimin' to come down-town. In fac', right now he's layin' down, but he p'intedly insists on seein' you 'mediately. He says it's most highly important. 'At's the message he tells me fur to convey, suh."

"Well," he says, sort of grumbling, "it's getting on toward my lunch-time; but I suppose I could come. Tell him I'll be there in half-an-hour from now."

"Yas suh," I says, "thanky suh. . . . Hole on, Mr. Raynor; they's jest one thing else." And now I lets my voice slink down, sort of cautious-like. "Mr. Raynor," I says, "I done deliver Mr. Dallases' word to you

—now I wishes fur to say a lil' somethin' on my own 'count. W'en you gits yere, please suh, come straight on up to the 'partmint widout bein' 'nounced frum downstairs an' walk right on in widout knockin' or ringin' the bell—the do' 'll be onlatched. I'll be waitin' fur you in the privit hall to 'scort you into the front room. I craves to speak wid you a minute, jest by ourselves."

"What's the big idea?" he says.

"I can't 'splain over the 'phone by reason 'at I mout be over-heared," I says; "but I allus has lakked you, suh, frum the fust—an' mebbe I mout give you a few p'inters 'at you sh'd oughter know befo'hand."

"Oh, I see," he said. "There's been some loose talking going on up there and you've heard something you think might interest me, eh? Fine and dandy! Well, Jeff, you're wise to line up with me—it shows you've got sense. You won't lose by it, either. I'm always willing to pay the top market-price for valuable inside information."

"Yas, suh," I says, "thanky, suh—'at's partially whut I wuz figgerin' on. I'll be

hoverin' 'bout on the look-out fur you, suh, 'cause it shorely is mouty essential——"

Right here I breaks off sudden, like as if I'd suddenly got scared that I might be eavesdropped on or interrupted or something.

Well, the fruitful seed has done been planted. Almost before I has time to hang up and get up from that there telephone it seems like to me I can feel 'em organizing to sprout under my feet.

CHAPTER XIX

Pistol Plays

I HAS fully half an hour to wait and I puts it in going over the program, as it has already done been mapped out, just to make absolute sure nothing ain't been left out. There's one switch in the plans, which I decides to make it right at the last minute, mighty near it. This here decision is that I'll shove things along powerful brisk once we gets going good and under way; which naturally this means I've got to change my Riverside Drive system. But circumstances alters cases and what's side-meat for one is cold poison for another. The way I looks at it, it all depends on the anigosity [1] of the occasion.

Now, with the lady, the best scheme, seemed like to me, was not to crowd the

[1] Note.—The word is believed to be one of Jeff's own coinage. It is left as written. Its meaning may be doubtful but who will deny that it is a good word?

mourners, as the saying is, but just to lazy along in a weaving way, letting the specifications sink into her one by one and thereby thus giving her time to brood over each separate point as it come forth. But with him I figures the best plan is the quick-rushing plan. I figures I've got to take him short from the go-off and keep on shocking him so fast and so hard with promises of devastations that he won't have time to catch up with his thinking, and then at the proper time dash the mainest jolt of all right *bang* in his face.

But before that proper minute comes he's got to be rightly prepared in his mind for it. He's got to be hearing mournful music and muffled drums beating in his ears. He's got to feel an icy cold breath blowing on his overhet temples. He's got to have a raging fever in his forehead, but a heavy frost congealing his feet. And most of all he's got to have a sad picture dancing before his eyes of from six to twelve of his most intimate friends getting measured for white gloves. Just let them things come to pass, sort of simultaneous, and it's sure go-

ing to be a case of Sukey, bar the door, with our gentleman friend!

Leastwise, that is the way I organizes it in my head whilst I'm setting in that there little hall of ours waiting watchfully. Before a great while I hears one of the elevators stopping at our floor and I hears slinky kitty-cat steps coming along towards our door. So I knows that must be him and I gets back and sort of squats in the side passage leading off into the service wing, so I can come slipping out like as if I was in a hurry to meet him as he come in, but had been detained.

The door opens right easy and in slides Mr. Raynor, same as a mouse into a trap. I can almost see his nose wrinkling up like he's smelling of the cheese and craving to start nibbling at it. He looks round him and sees me and he gives me a meaning wink. I makes motions to him to be quiet, which that ain't necessary but it helps the play along for me to be plenty warnful in my manners; and then I tiptoes on up the hall towards the setting-room, leading the way for him; and he takes the hint and tip-

toes along behind me. But at the setting-room door I slows up and steps to one side to let him pass on in first and that gives me a chance to spring the catch-bolt on the door behind us, unbeknownst to him. I takes his hat and coat, all the time rolling my eyes round on every side like I'm apprehentious somebody else might be breaking in on us from the back part of the apartment, and then I says to him in a kind of a significating whisper, I says:

"Oh, Mr. Raynor, I been truly oneasy in my mind 'bout you—I'm mouty sorry 'at you come!"

"Sorry?" he says, sort of startled. "Why, you telephoned me yourself."

"Yas, suh, I knows I did," I says; "but I wuz only obeyin' awders—an' anyways 'at wuz befo' things begun to tek the more serious turn w'ich they has took. I'd a-halted you at the front do' yonder an' turned you back ef I could've, but I wuz delayed back in the boss' baid-room tryin' to argue him out of his notion an' tha's how come I didn't git thar to give you the warnin' word. Or," I says, "ef they'd a-been time an' I'd a-got

the chance—both of w'ich I had neither—I'd a-ketched you on the telephone an' stopped you befo' ever you started up-town frum the office. So this move—tollin' you in yere an' fortifyin' you up, suh,—is the onliest other one I could think of," I says; "an' so, no matter how it may turn out," I says, "I want you to carry wid you the 'membrunces 'at I done the level best I could fur you."

"Say," he says, "what's all this palaver about?" He's speaking quite bluffy, but even so I can tell that the uneasiness is beginning to seep into his ankles. "Why shouldn't I come here? I was sent for, wasn't I? For that matter, why shouldn't I come without being sent for? I'm not worried about my position in this row—I'm safe."

"Sh-h-h!" I says, "please, suh, *sh-h-h!* Keep yore voice down," I says, "whutever else you may do. This ain't no time to be talkin' loud," I says.

"I'll swear I don't get you," he says. But he's took heed and now his notes is low and more worried-like. "I'm asked to come up

here on a matter of business, as I suppose. I gather from your hints over the telephone you think you've found out something which I might be willing to give money for, as an exclusive advance tip. So far, so good; I'm always open to reason. Then I get here and you behave as mysteriously as a ghost and go *sh-h-hing* about as though somebody was dead on the premises. What's the——"

"Oh, Mr. Raynor," I says, "don't speak of nobody bein' daid on these premises. It sounds too much lak a dreadin' perdiction. Mr. Raynor," I says, "fur the sakes of all, please lis'sen an' lemme say my say whilst they's yit time!"

"All right," he says; "go ahead. I won't interrupt again, although I still don't see why you should take the matter so seriously." But in spite of the fact that when he says this he's grinning at me I judges that by now the uneasiness has started crawling up his legs. It's one of them sickly, pestered grins.

"Well, suh," I says, "all last night an' th'ough the early parts of this mawnin' Mr.

Dallas is been carryin' on lak he was mouty nigh distracted. Frum words w'ich he lets fall, partly to me an' partly w'en he's tawkin' to hisse'f, I meks out 'at the trouble is on 'count of bus'ness dealin's 'twixt you an' him, an' also 'at he's harborin' a 'special pet gredge ag'in you on 'count of somethin' or other. Fur a spell he tawked right smart 'bout a compermise settlemint an' 'at wuz whut I wanted to tell you pussonally in privit—'at the idee of a compermise settlemint wuz floatin' in his mind. He didn't sleep none las' night but he walked the floor stiddy till pas' daylight; an' all th'ough these mawnin' hours, seemed lak to me, he's been gittin' mo' an' mo' antagonized ez the time went by. Frum the symptoms I should a-knowed whut wuz brewin'. But I reckin I must a-been blinded, whut wid things bein' so out of kelter round the 'partmint. W'en he bidden me fur to call you up an' invite yore presence yere right away I still didn't 'spicion the true facts. But right after I'd got th'ough telephonin' down to the office I went back to his room to say you'd be comin' shortly an' ez I stepped in

the do' an' seen him fumblin' in 'at dressin'-table drawer an' seen the rampagious look w'ich wuz on his face—oh, Mr. Raynor, suh, right 'en wuz w'en my heart upset itse'f insides my chist!

" 'Cause I done seen 'at look on his face befo' now; I seen it fo' yeahs ago, the time w'en 'at electioneerin' fuss of his wid the late Mr. Dave Townsend come up. At leas' once't I seen it on his paw's face an' I seen it mo' times 'en once't on the face of his uncle, Mr. Z. T. Pulliam, w'ich they called him Hell-Roarin' Zack fur short. It runs in the blood an' it ripens in the breedin'—'at look do. You don't never want to tamper wid a Pulliam—they comes untamped too easy! They goes 'long jest ez peaceable an' quiet ez a onborn lamb up to a suttin p'int an' 'en 'at look comes over 'em an' the by-standers starts removin' theyselves to a place of safety. They calls it the deadly sign of the Pulliam fambly down our way 'cause they knows whut it means—they's seen it loomin' th'ough the pistol-smoke too of'en. An' so——"

"What sort of a bluff is this you're trying

to hand me?" he says. But his face all of a sudden has turned just the color of chalk and his voice is quivering so the words comes forth from between his lips all sort of broken up. The man's looks don't match his language. "Are you trying to tell me there's gun-play threatening around here? Well, that's not done any more!"

"You's right!" I says. "Wid the Pulliamses, after the fust shot, it ain't necessary fur it to be done any mo'—jest once't is ample! They lets go frum the hip an' they don't rarely nor never miss—I reckin it comes natchel to 'em. Oh, Mr. Raynor, I knows whut the danger is better'n you possibly kin! An' oh, Mr. Raynor, I's so skeered on yore 'count—you havin' been alluz mouty friendly to me an' you still so young, too! An' I's skeered on Mr. Dallases' 'count lakwise, 'cause these cotehouse folks up yere they prob'ly won't 'preciate whut is the custom of our locality fur the settlin' of privit misunderstandin's betwixt gen'elmen. I'm most crazy in my mind, ez you kin see! Ef only I could a-got him cooled off an' ca'mmed down befo' you got yere! I tried

an' I tried but 'twuzn't no use—it never is no use tryin', wid a Pulliam. An' even now ef only we could onduce him to hole off an' lis'sen to reasonable argumints frum you befo' he cuts loose! Oh, Mr. Raynor, I do hope an' pray he see fit to give you a chanc't to 'splain 'way the diffe'nces! But, oh, I dreads the wust! 'Cause he's crouchin' back yonder waitin', wid his trigger-finger twitchin', an' w'en he sees you——"

"Let me out of here!" he says. And though he says it kind of half-whispering yet he says it kind of half-screeching, too.

And with that he makes a break for the door behind him, aiming to bust out down the hall. But it's locked.

And with that, likewise I turns over a little centre-table and it goes down on its side with a bang, which that is the ordained signal agreed on previous, and I lets a yell out of me.

"Oh, Lawsy," I yells, "it's too late—yere he is now!"

And then Mr. Raynor ceases from pawing at the latch and spins round and plasters himself flat against the door-panels like

he was pinned there, with his arms stretched wide and his fingers clawing at the woodwork. And here, in through the curtains of the library door comes Mr. Dallas, that's all, stepping light on the balls of his feet, with his eyes blazing and his hair all mussed-up, and down at his right side, it swinging loose and free, he's carrying that three-pound chunk of Snake-Eye Jamison's shootlery. I don't know whether it's the excitement, or the spell of the play-acting on him, or the righteous mad which is in him, but he looks so perilous I'm mighty near scared of him my own self. And even though he ain't never toted no pistol before in his life he's handling this here big blue borrowed smoke-wagon like he'd cut his milk-teeth on one. And I'm mighty glad she ain't loaded, neither; else he might start living up to the reputation I've done endowed him with.

That's all, but that's plenty! As Mr. H. C. Raynor's knees begins giving way under him he starts in to pleading at the top of his voice. You could a-heard him plumb down in the street I reckon.

"For God's sake," he begs, "don't shoot! For God's sake, don't shoot yet! Give me a minute—give me time to explain! I'll do anything you say, Pulliam—we can square this thing! Only, for God's sake, don't shoot!"

By the time he's got this much out of him he's setting down flat against the door, with his legs stretched out straight in front of him and his feet kind of dancing on the floor so that his heels makes little knocking sounds. He looks like he's fixing to faint away. Maybe he did faint, but if he did, I know the faintfulness didn't get no higher up than his throat, because the last thing I heard as I went on out from there through the library, was him still babbling away.

Up till the time I left, Mr. Dallas hadn't spoke nary word—just stood there wagging that there chunk of hardware in the general direction of Mr. Raynor and licking at his lips with his tongue, sort of eager-like. Well, thus far, it hadn't been necessary for him to say nothing—Mr. Raynor was doing enough talking for any number you might care to name, up to half a dozen.

CHAPTER XX

Piebald Joys

IT'S maybe twenty minutes later on when Mr. Dallas calls to me to come to him and bring Koga with me, him saying the both of us is required for to witness an agreement which has been drawed up. Right then and there for the first and last time in my life, that there Japanee boy wins my admirations. He don't bat a single eyelash as he follows me in where they is. He acts like all his life he'd been used to walking into a settingroom and finding two gentlemen there, one of 'em with a pistol and the other with a hard chill. He just sucks his breath in once or twice and starts smiling very pleasant upon one and all. I judges he must a-been brought up in a kind of a rough neighborhood over in his own country.

Mr. Raynor has done rose up from the

floor by this time, and is setting in a chair where he can be more comfortable; at that, he ain't seeming totally comfortable. His teeth and his hands and his feet keeps on misbehaving, and he looks to me like he's been losing considerable flesh even in that short time since I left him. His complexion also remains very bad. You'd say, offhand, here was a gentleman fixing to be taken down with a severe spell of illness, or else just getting over one and still far from well.

He puts his name to a piece of writing which is spread out on the table, Mr. Dallas standing over him and sort of indicating the place to him with the nozzle of that there trusty old forty-four. He has some difficulty in getting his name set down by reason of him keeping flinching away from the gun and also on account of his fingers being so out of control. Then me and Koga likewise signs and whilst I is so doing I rejoices to note that the document is all done in Mr. Dallases' handwriting.

When this has been attended to there does not seem to be no reason why Mr. Raynor

should linger longer amongst us. He indicates that he craves to go but still don't actually go till Mr. Dallas gives him the word. For such a previously brash white man he certainly has been rendered very docile. And dumb—huh! Alongside of him guinea-pigs is plumb rambunctuous.

I helps him on with his overcoat, which he has trouble getting into it by reason of not seeming to be able to stick his arms into the sleeves until after several tries; and such is his agitated feelings that he starts off forgetting his hat. I puts it on his head for him, him not saying a word but just staring about him kind of null and void, and now and then shivering slightly; and as he goes down the hall towards the elevator he's got one hand sort of pressed up against the wall for to support him on his way. If I'd been him I should a-went right straight on home and laid down for a spell. Probably that's what he did do. I know I ain't seen hair nor hide of him since and I ain't expecting to do so, neither, without we should run into one another by accident on the street sometime.

As I comes back from the front door after seeing him safely off, Mr. Dallas is waiting for me in the middle of the floor with a grin on his face, which it mighty near splits his face in half across the middle. He lays down the agreement paper and the artillery so he can shake hands with me with both hands.

"Jeff," he says, "for the second time in less than two hours let me tender you my earnest congratulations and my everlasting gratitude. Thanks to you," he says, "and you alone, I'm getting out of the double-barreled hole I was in, reasonably intact. What's gone I'll gladly charge up to profit and loss and valuable experience. What's left is a whole lot more than I had dared to hope it would be before you took a hand. When I look back on my feelings last night and contrast them with my feelings today—say, by Jupiter!" he says, "come to think of it, it's all happened between late dinner-time of one day and late lunch-time of the next! It doesn't seem possible! What can I do to square myself with you for the debt I owe you?"

"Well, suh," I says, "you mout start in to please me by eatin' a lil' somethin'. Yore speakin' of lunch-time 'minds me 'at you ain't been right constant at yore meals lately. Whut you needs," I says, "is to git yore appetite back an' stow a smidgin' of warm vittles down yore insides."

"Jeff," he says, still hanging onto my hands and pumping 'em so fervent it makes me feel right diffident for him to be doing so, "you're the doctor and your prescriptions suit me. Bring on the grub! Say it with chowders! We'll celebrate," he says, "over the festal hot biscuits! What, ho, for the wassail waffles!"

And with that he goes prancing about over the room dragging me along with him, like he was, say, about nine years old, going on ten.

CHAPTER XXI

Headed Home

FOR a fact, that meal which he eats is more like a celebration than a regulation meal, but considering of everything, I reckon that's no more than what is to be expected.

He's half way through with his second helpings of the lamb chops when he looks up at me where I'm standing back of his chair and he says to me with one of them old-time little-boy twinkles in his eye, like he used to have:

"Jeff," he says, "you certainly can paint a fanciful picture when you set yourself to it. When I think of the blood-thirsty characteristics which you bestowed upon those devout and peace-loving ancestors of mine I have to stop eating and laugh again."

"You must a-been lis'senin' 'en," I says.

"I overheard part of the tale from behind

the portieres," he says. "Oh, but it was great stuff, and highly convincing! Even in that crucial moment I could appreciate your deft touches."

"You ain't knowin' the ha'f of it yit, suh," I says. "Wait till you hears tell 'bout them fictionary kinsfolks I's conferred 'pon you in 'nother quarter an' how I endowed the whole passil of 'em wid the chronic failin' of bein' onreliable in the haid. I 'spects you'll want to use 'at pistol shore-'nuff in earnest 'en."

"Not me," he says; "not me. I'll give three ringing cheers for your superior inventive qualities. If I had your power of imagination I'd charge admission," he says.

"I'm glad you feels 'at way, suh," I says, "but I shore does aim to walk wide of the deceasted members of the Pulliam fambly w'en I crosses over to the fur side of the deep River of Jordan," I says. "I ain't cravin' to git in no jam wid any ole residenter angels till I's used to bein' one myse'f. I wonder," I says, "whut Mr. H. C. Raynor 'd think ef he knowed 'at yore Uncle Zachary wuz a Persistin' Elder of the

Southe'n Meth'dis' Church fur goin' on twenty yeahs?"

"Never mind what he thinks now or hereafter," he says. "It's what my late partner did that counts. Anyhow, you didn't deceive him when you told him Uncle Zach's nickname."

" 'At did fit in nice," I says; "me rememb'rin', jest in the nick of time, 'at they called the ole gen'elman Hell Roarin' Zach by reason of his exhortin' powers w'en 'scribin' them brimstones an' them hot fires bein' so potent 'at the sinners could smell 'em an' shiver. Well, suh, tha's all part of my system: Stir a slight seasonin' of truthfulness into the mixture frum time to time an' it meks the batter stand up stiffer. An' also don't never waste a good lie widout you has to—save 'em till you needs 'em. Tha's my motto, suh."

"And I subscribe to it," he says, and he chuckles some more. In fact he's chuckling right straight along till he gets up from the table. Then he rears back in a chair and sets a cigar going. He makes me take a cigar, too, which it is the first time I has

ever smoked in a white gentleman's presence whilst serving him. But this is a special occasion and more like a jollification than anything else. So I starts puffing on her when my Young Cap'n insists upon it; and then, at his command, I just lit in and told him all what had happened at Miss DeWitt's flat that morning and about a lot of other things—things I'd overheard and things I'd suspicioned—which it had not seemed fitten to tell 'em to him before this, but now both time and place appears suitable.

Talking about one thing leads to talking about another, as it will, and presently I finds myself confiding to him the expective undertakings of the firm of Poindexter & Petty, which that is all news out of a clear sky to him, seeing as I'd kept this to myself as a private matter in the early stages. He says he'd sort of figured, though, I had something up my sleeves, by reason of my having seemed so interested in the moving-picture business and all. And though he don't say so, I judges he figures out, too, that here lately I maybe has refrained from

speaking to him about my own affairs when he was so pesticated about his own—which also, more or less, is the truth of it.

But now he's deeply interested and 'lows he wants to hear more. He states that while he's sorry on his own account that I is not going back home with him when he goes, which that will be just as soon as he can clean up things here and sell off the lease on the apartment and so forth, still, he says, he's glad for my sake that I'm going to stay on since I've got bright prospects ahead of me for to break into the business life of the Great City. Him saying this so kindly inspires me to go on and tell him all about our plans and purposes. I says that the outlook is that me and 'Lisses Petty will be ready to open up pretty soon, seeing as I has had word just two days before from Mr. Simons that he's almost ready to cut loose with his announcements in the papers. I'm going on further along this line when all of a sudden he busts in to ask me what about the old judge coming home in the springtime from foreign-off parts and not finding me there to meet him?

Well, sirs, that do fetch me up short with a jar! Because, if it must be confessed, I've got to admit I has been so carried away with my own pet schemes that the thought of my obligations to Judge Priest is done entirely escaped out of my foolish mind. I hates to draw back from them new ambitions of mine and yet, seems like, I can't hardly bear the notion of breaking my bounden promises to my old boss-man after the way we'd been associated together under the same roof for going on it's sixteen years. What with the one thing pulling me this here way and the other thing pulling me that there way, all of a sudden I now gets a kind of a choked-up feeling in my breast. I don't know whether it's the wrench at my heart or the strain on my wishbone. But it's there! So I ups and puts the proposition before the Young Cap'n and I asks what he thinks I should do?

He studies a minute and then he says to me, he says:

"Jeff," he says, "I'll tell you how I feel about it and if, in view of the lack of judgment I've shown recently in certain other

matters, you still regard my advice as being worth anything, you're welcome to it. You believe you've got a chance to make good up here, don't you? Well, then, I believe it's your duty to yourself, regardless of almost every other consideration, to take advantage of that chance. And I'm positive Judge Priest will feel the same way about it when he learns the situation. I believe he'll gladly release you from any obligations you may owe him. In fact, knowing him so well, I'll bank on it. With your consent I'll write him tonight, a long letter, setting forth the exact conditions. How does that strike you."

I tells him I is agreeable to that. But I says to him, I says:

"Mr. Dallas, one thing more, please, suh? In yore letter tell the Jedge 'at w'en he gits back, ef he finds the home-place ain't runnin' to suit him widout me on hand to he'p look after his comfort, w'y all he's got do is jest lemme know an' I'll ketch the next train fur home. Ef the bus'ness yere can't run herse'f aw'ile wid 'Lisses Petty alone

on the job by hisse'f, then let the whole shebang go busted—tha's all.

"Lis'sen, Mr. Dallas," I says, "I got yit 'nother idee in my haid—I craves to demerstrate one thing! They's some w'ite folkses w'ich claims the run of black folks nowadays ain't got no proper sense of gratitudes nor faithfulness, neither. They claims 'at the new-issue cullid ain't lak the ole-timers of the race wuz—'at they furgits favors an' bre'ks pledges an' sometimes turns an' bites the hand w'ich has fed an' fondled 'em. Mebbe they is right—I ain't 'sputin' they ain't, in some cases. But I is sayin' they is one shiny black nigger jest rearin' to prove the contrarywise so fur ez he pussonally is concern', w'ich I'm," I says, "him!

"An' in fu'ther proof whar'of," I says, "I begs you to mek me a solemn promise, yere an' now. I asts you, please, suh, to keep yo eye on the ole boss-man an' ef he sh'd show the onfailin' signs of feeblin'-up an' bre'kin' down—w'ich is only to be 'spected, seein' ez he is gittin' 'long so in yeahs—I don't want you to wait 'twell he notifies me

hisse'f 'at he's needin' me. 'Cause the chances is he wouldn't do it, noways, effen he feared it mout mean a sacrifice on my part fur me to come to him. I wants you to send me the word on yore own 'sponsibility an' I'll git to his side jest ez fast ez them steam-cyars kin tote me."

He says he is glad I feels thus-and-so about it and he gladly passes his word to do like I asked him, if the situation arises. With this here point settled he guides me back to tell him yet more about the prospects of Poindexter & Petty. Which I ain't needing much prompting there, seeing as the said projects lays close to my heart and my mind. I tells him we has reached the point where we is about to close the deal for the office. In fact, I says, I has been calculating some on running up-town to see 'Lisses about that very detail this same afternoon providing he don't need me round the apartment to do something or other for him. Whereupon he up and says an astonishing thing:

"I'll go along with you if you don't mind," he says. "I want to have a look at

this associate of yours and get his views. I'd like to do more than that if it can be arranged; I'd like to lend my aid in helping to put this enterprise on its feet—to feel that, in one way or another, I had a friendly hand in it. I'm your eternal debtor, you know, Jeff."

"Go 'way frum yere, Mr. Dallas," I says, "an' quit yore foolin'. Whut bus'ness has you got gittin' yo'se'f mixed in wid a pack of nigger-rubbage? Whut would the rest of the high-toned folks down home say ef they heared of any sech goings-on 'pon yore part? Tell me 'at, suh?"

"Never mind what they'd think or what they'd say," he says; "that's my look-out. Tell me the truth now, Jeff,—have you two boys got all the money you need to start you up and to keep you going until your agency begins to pay?"

At that I has to admit to him that the prior expenses has been right smart heavier than what us two had figured on at the start-off.

"That's what I rather suspected," he says. "Now then, I've got out of my own compli-

cations in much better shape than I'd ever dreamed I could. I still have a sizeable stake left. In fact I figure I've got just about a thousand dollars to spare. If you don't feel like taking a thousand dollars from me as a gift, or in part payment for your services to me during the past twenty-odd hours, why not take it as a loan without interest until you get on your feet, or until you've had ample opportunity to try this new venture out thoroughly—No, by Jove, I've got a better plan than that! I want to stick that thousand in as an investment along with you two boys. If I never get it back, or any part of it, I'll count it money well-spent. I've made a number of other investments in my bright young life that didn't pay either, and I'll be drawing regular dividends on this one, even though they may not be in terms of dollars and cents. Come on—let's go see this friend, Petty, of yours. You can't keep me out of the deal on anything short of an injunction."

What is you going to do with a hard-headed white man when he gets his neck bowed that-a-way? You is going to do just

what we done, that's what you going do! So that's how come Poindexter & Petty is now got for their silent partner a member of one of the oldest families in West Kentucky and pure quality from the feet up.

I has come mighty close to forgetting one other thing which happens before we leaves the place to go on up to Harlem. I is helping him on with his coat when he says:

"Wait a minute! I want to write out some telegrams first. I want to send one to my lawyer, Mr. Jere Fairleigh, stating that the Prodigal will shortly be on his way back, and one to my cousin to have the homeplace opened up for me—and one other. I've gotten rather behind with my correspondence lately; I'll do some letter-writing tonight. But I'll wire on ahead first. You call a messenger-boy, Jeff."

I trusts I is not no spy but I just can't keep from peeping over his shoulder whilst he's writing out that there third telegram—which it is pretty near long enough to be a letter itself—and I is rejoiced in my soul to note that it's being sent to the one I hoped 'twas—and that's Miss Henrietta Farrell.

CHAPTER XXII

Last Words

WELL, I got my Young Cap'n off this morning. I has to admit that I begun contracting a kind of a let-down feeling in my mind as the time drawed near for us to say our farewells to one another. You couldn't exactly call it home-sickness nor yet downright sorrowfulness; it was kind of a mixed sensation, with regretitude and lonesomeness and gladsomeness all scrambled up together, and running through it, a knowledge that I'm going to miss him mighty much for awhile, anyhow. I certainly has grown powerful devoted to him since last summer and I knows full well that, from his standpoint, he must have similar regards towards me. I reckon our own kind of folks can appreciate how this attachment could

a-sprung up betwixt us, even if most of these here Northerners can't.

It must be that my looks more or less betrays my emotions as the parting time draws closer, because he keeps on speaking cheering utterances to me about other matters, without mentioning the nearby separation; which I appreciates the spirit behind his words as much as I does the words themselves. If I told it to him once at that depot I suppose I must a-told it to him a dozen times, to give my most respectful regards to the old boss-man when next he sees him. And he keeps saying to me I must write regular and keep him posted on everything in general.

"I's shore countin' on seein' you down home next summer w'en I comes down on a visit," I says; "I's already mekin' my plans 'cordin'ly. Mebbe," I says, "you mout ketch me sneakin' in even sooner 'en 'at, ef so be this yere bookin' agency bus'ness teks a notion to blow up on us."

"I've got a conviction you'll make good," he says. "If the first venture doesn't pan out I'll trust in you to light on your feet

somewhere else—I've seen you in operation, you know." Then he goes on, speaking now a little bit wistful-like: "You seem able to figure out a way to beat this New York game, by playing it according to your own set of rules. But I couldn't do it—I had it proven to me and the proof cost me money. I'm through—and ought to be glad of it. You're just starting."

"Well, suh," I says, "I does my best. The way I looks at this town," I says, "is this yere way: Jest ez soon ez you gits over bein' daunted-up by the size of her, the best scheme is to start in lettin' on lak you knows mo' 'bout 'most ever'thin' 'en whut the folkses does w'ich has been livin' yere all along. That'll fetch 'em ef anything will, or else I misses my guess. This is the onliest place I knows of," I says, "whar a shined-up counterfeit passes muster jest ez well ez the pyure gold, ef not better, 'specially ef the gold happens to be sort of dulled-down an' tarnished-lookin'. The very way the town is laid out he'ps to clarify my p'int, suh," I says. "She's fenced in betwixt a bluff on one side an' a Sound on the other, an' she's

sufferin' frum the effects of her own joggraphy. Jest combine in yore daily actions the biggest of bluffs an' the most roarin' of sounds an' she's liable to lay down at yore feet an' roll over at yore command. Leas'-wise," I says, "them's my beliefs."

"Probably you are right," he says. "Well, Jeff, try not to let these people up here spoil you and make you fresh and impudent. I don't believe they will, though."

"Oh, but you is wrong thar, suh," I says. "I kin tek spilin' ez well ez the nex' one. Ef they aims to come edgin' 'crost the cullerline in my direction, I ain't the one to hender 'em. Whut they gives, I'll tek an' a lil' bit mo'. Ef they ain't had the 'vantage of bein' raised the way you an' me is, an' wants fur to pamper me all up, I'm goin' to let 'em do so. Fact is, Mr. Dallas," I says, "I's gittin' pampered already. Lemme show you somethin', suh, in strictes' confidences—yere's a perfessional callin'-cyard, w'ich I had a lot of 'em struck off yistiddy at a printin'-shop over on Columbus Avenue." And I deals the top one off of the pack in my vest pocket and hands it over to

him. "See whut it sez," I says. "It sez, 'Col. J. Exeter Poindexter, Esq.' "

"How did you work that arrangement out?" he says, smiling.

"Mouty easy-lak," I says. " 'Col.' is short for 'cullid', ain't it? So I jest shortens up 'cullid' into 'Col.' an' switches it frum the caboose end to the front end. An' I changes my middle name to 'Exeter' w'ich it has a mo' stylish sound to it 'en whut 'Exodus' had. An' I tacks on the 'Esq.' at the fur endin' to mek it still mo' bindin', lak the button on a rattle-snake's tail. An' thar you is, suh!"

"But you are not a colonel—yet," he says.

"Whut's the diff'unce," I says, "so long ez these yere folkses don't know no better. They fattens on bein' deceived. An', anyway," I says, "I aims fur to cultivate the military manner. Mr. Dallas," I says, "don't mek no mistek 'bout it—I's gittin' fresh already, w'ich it is the customary custom yere, an' the chances is I'll git still fresher yit. But it'll be fur Noo Yawk pu'pposes 'sclusively. W'en I meets up wid one of my own kind of w'ite folks in these

parts or w'en I goes back ag'in amongst my own folks down below the Line, I'll know my place an' my station an' I'll respec' 'em both; an' I'll be jest the same plain reg'lar ole J. Poindexter, Cullid, w'ich you alluz has knowed. Please, suh, tell Jedge Priest 'at fur me, too!" I says.

The time comes for him to get aboard without he wants to miss his train. So we says our parting words. I reckons some of them white foreigners standing there gaping at us can't understand why it is that Mr. Dallas, and him a Southern-born white gentleman, should throw his arm around my shoulder at the farewell moment and pat me on the back. But then, of course, that's due to the ignorance of their raisings and probably they is not to blame so much after all.

I will now draw to a close with the above accounts. Writing is a sight harder work than I thought it would be when I set in to do this authorizing, and I is not sorry to be shut of the job. Anyway, from now on, I'm a New York business man, which

I counts on it paying better than writing for a living, if only I've got the right salt for sprinkling on the Luck-Bird's tail.

I think I has.

THE END

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